

PHILANTHROPY *for*  
SOCIAL JUSTICE *and* PEACE

# Effective philanthropy: another take

Stories of successful grants from:

Naseej Foundation, Arab Region

Fikra, Tunisia

Webb Memorial Trust, UK

Indonesia For Humanity

Brazil Human Rights Fund

Ford Foundation, Philippines

Patrick F Taylor Foundation, USA

Community Foundation For Northern Ireland

Bernard Van Leer Foundation, Netherlands

Ford Foundation, USA

Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, UK

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## Foreword



Giving money away is easy, but giving money away to effect real social change can be hard. What is the problem? What will actually change it? Who should get the money? What will they do with it? How long should they get it for? How will they and you know if their original idea is working? What changes should they make as the work progresses or falters? It is easy to give money for blankets or scholarships, but while that money helps individuals, it does little to change the social (or economic or political) conditions that created the need in the first place. It doesn't 'change the rules' that support injustice or violence. How does a funder do that?

For ten years, my job at the Ford Foundation was to think about these questions and help direct the Foundation's efforts to find the answers. I searched for help among academic centres on philanthropy, foundation networks and consulting groups, but found almost none that had a rigorous understanding of how grantmakers can effectively support work to counter systemic inequality or violence.

Then I looked across the world and asked over a dozen of the best people I knew from different regions to help. Most of them were heads or senior staff of foundations; all were committed to fighting injustice and violence; all were immensely busy dealing with these and other issues. They agreed to come together, roll up their sleeves and work as volunteers. We first met in 2007 and now, almost ten years later, the Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace, as it came to be known, is still active in virtually every region of the world. It currently has 15 members supported by a coordinator in Jaipur, India; many of these were members of the original group.

The Working Group became independent in 2009. In its many activities it pursues three objectives:

- Developing tools and practices to advance philanthropic giving for social justice and peace
- Providing legitimacy and encouragement for this kind of funding
- Supporting a global network of practitioners who are committed to the same ends

### Current Working Group members

- Akwasi Aidoo, Senior Fellow at Humanity United (USA)
- Albert Ruesga, Greater New Orleans Foundation (USA)
- Ana Valeria Araujo, Brazil Fund for Human Rights
- Atallah Kuttub, SAANED for Philanthropy Advisory Services (Jordan)
- Avila Kilmurray, Social Change Initiative (Northern Ireland), formerly of Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
- Barry Knight, CENTRIS and Webb Memorial Trust (UK)
- Christopher Harris, consultant (USA) to NOREF: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre
- Halima Mahomed, independent philanthropy consultant (South Africa)
- Hania Aswad, Naseej Foundation (Arab Region)
- Kamala Chandrakirana, Indonesia for Humanity Foundation
- Lisa Jordan, Porticus (Netherlands)
- Loren Harris, W K Kellogg Foundation (USA)
- Sarah Mukasa, Open Society Initiative for East Africa (Uganda)
- Stephen Pittam, formerly of Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (UK)
- Sumitra Mishra, iPartner (India)
- Suzanne E Siskel, The Asia Foundation (USA)

The Working Group has been and continues to be enormously productive – despite all members being volunteers. As well as operating as an organization, individual members often contribute as advisers, board members and consultants to other organizations without invoking the name of the Working Group – but always with the three objectives in mind. Its members have helped individual philanthropists and funds, as well as regional and global networks of foundations, in virtually all parts of the globe. The Working Group is presently exploring ways to help create regional ‘hubs’ that can assist local funders in this work and devising a global assessment that will identify critical new needs. It is also active in the development of a ‘new literature’ for and about philanthropic giving for social justice and peacebuilding. This publication is part of that effort.

Working Group members frequently encounter funders interested in supporting justice who, for a variety of reasons, are reluctant to take the first step and want to know ‘How is it actually done?’ This publication is an attempt to crack open the ‘black box’ of funding intended to change conditions that cause and maintain injustice – and to show how some people have done it. What did they think at first? Were they confused? How did they figure out what to do?

The stories collected here were selected by the Working Group to be short and readable, dealing with very different problems in different locales and at different scales – so that most readers can find something like themselves.

The stories are not to be read in any particular order. We encourage readers to explore them as they wish. Each offers insights into the many decisions and choices that funders must face when seeking to effect social change. This work is complicated and hard – but not impossible. It is the hope of all members of the Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace that this collection of stories will serve to help other funders reconsider their giving in light of the experiences described.

**Christopher Harris**  
**April 2016**

## About the stories



**Caroline Hartnell and Andrew Milner**

Enabling girls in a community in Palestine to finish their high school education through revival of a great cultural concept; opening up the possibility of higher education to poor students in the US state of Louisiana and raising standards across the state in the process; making a grant to a group of LGBT activists to help change public attitudes to LGBT people in Northern Ireland; supporting an unknown UK group called the Carbon Tracker

Initiative that developed the concept of 'stranded assets' that underpins the movement to divest from fossil fuels – these and the other stories in this collection show how much can be achieved through an approach some have called philanthropy for social justice, though in many cases what is described is still very much the beginning of the story.

The stories all describe a philanthropic intervention against some form of injustice, actual or potential. They show that a just approach should inform the means as well as the ends of the work if funders are to effect positive social change. One of the common threads running through many of the stories is that the intervention was effective because the funder based the work on consultations with those at the centre of the problem: mothers protesting indiscriminate police violence in Brazil; farmers' movements affirming rights to land in Indonesia; village communities looking for means to create livelihoods in rural Tunisia; and, perhaps the most striking example of all, children in north-east England documenting and speaking out against child poverty.

Some funders may see all this as too difficult: the process is so time-consuming, the results so long in coming. But these stories show that this participative approach and long-term commitment are key to success. While there are challenges and risks in this approach to philanthropy, they are not insurmountable, and the rewards are great.

The Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace has worked since 2007 to support philanthropy that addresses the root causes of persistent poverty, growing inequality and injustice in the

world. This collection of stories came about because they recognized the need to produce concrete and compelling accounts of the work of such philanthropy. Their purpose in telling these stories is to broaden the circle of philanthropy practitioners whose aim is to help produce lasting change in the lives of people and communities.

The Working Group's message to these potential funders might be summarized as follows: if you want to achieve lasting change and to have a positive impact on the lives of communities and individuals, this is the most effective way to do it. These stories show what can be done and how to do it and how the challenges were overcome along the way. They range from community-level interventions to initiatives that aimed to change public attitudes and thinking, sometimes at global level.

### Supporting marginalized groups and communities to achieve change in their own lives

This is at the heart of Naseej Foundation's approach. 'Naseej doesn't set priorities in terms of sector,' writes Hania Aswad. '... It's not that we don't see the urgency of particular issues; rather, we see the need for people and communities to be the decision makers.' This thinking is also clearly central to the work of Fikra in north-west Tunisia and the Webb Memorial Trust in the UK.

- The Naseej Foundation supported a group of young activists to work with a village in Palestine to extend the local school – and in so doing breathed new life into Al Ouneh, a practice of collective effort that had fallen into disuse.
- Fikra is a fund established by four European foundations in response to the Arab Spring. Its aim is to support local communities in developing their own resources and fulfilling their own aspirations.
- With child poverty remaining a widespread problem in the UK, the Webb Memorial Trust supported efforts over four years to make the voices of children themselves heard on the issue and to encourage them to participate in discussing how their society should run.

### Fighting for justice and opportunity

One common element in these stories is that they all involve attempts to change policy, which often means changes in the law.

- Indonesia for Humanity is supporting Sidomukti, a community located inside a palm oil plantation which is trying to secure government recognition of its rights to the land from which it was forcibly evicted 45 years earlier.
- Brazil Human Rights Fund supported Mothers of May, whose aim was to fight for truth and justice for the victims of institutional violence – an aim that evolved to embrace the bigger struggle against police violence and the violence of militias.
- The Ford Foundation supported 27 local education reform programmes throughout the Philippines, and the subsequent establishment of Synergeia, in an effort to improve the country's failing education system.
- The efforts of businessman and philanthropist Patrick Taylor led to the passing of a law in 1989 in the US state of Louisiana that every child who achieves certain standards should be allowed to go to college regardless of their parents' ability to pay. Taylor's work also led to a fundamental shift in public attitudes to children's rights to a good education.

### Challenging accepted attitudes and ways of thinking

Changing attitudes is perhaps the most challenging area of all. These stories show how significant changes have been achieved. In Northern Ireland this was through a small grant, but it was linked to a much wider programme.

- Community Foundation for Northern Ireland's £3,000 grant to the Rainbow Project helped spark a change in the public perception of LGBT people both in Derry and in Northern Ireland more widely.
- 'My father hit me. So what's the big deal?' Bernard van Leer Foundation launched a programme to reduce violence in children's lives, the first step being to shift social norms to make violence less acceptable.
- In the early 2000s, the Ford Foundation's International Economic Policy portfolio fostered a number of large networks of analysts and activists to develop an alternative economic narrative that could engage critically with the prevailing liberalization and deregulation policies associated with globalization.
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust's (JRCT's) early support for the Carbon Tracker Initiative helped to bring a radical and visionary idea, and the term 'stranded assets', into the mainstream of global economic thinking in just five years.

### The funder doesn't always know best

Most of the funders profiled in these stories clearly give more weight to their grantees' views and interpretation of events than to their own. With funders like Naseej Foundation and Fikra, supporting local communities in their own efforts is their *raison d'être*. Likewise, the Webb Memorial Trust's initiative is all about enabling the views of children to be heard.

But this attitude can be seen more widely, not least in the extensive use of consultations with those nearest to the problem. 'They know better than we do what needs to be done,' says Ana Valeria Araujo of the Brazil Human Rights Fund. 'JRCT knows that it doesn't have the answers to all the pressing issues of the day,' says Stephen Pittam. 'It maintains its role as a responsive funder because it wants to attract those with a clear vision of what needs to be done. Its role is that of facilitating such people and organizations to get on with the job.'

Out of all the stories in this collection, the only one that features what could be seen as a 'top-down' initiative is that of US businessman and philanthropist Patrick Taylor, whose determination that all children should be able to go to college regardless of their parents' ability to pay stemmed directly from his own experience: as a penniless young man from Texas, he was given the opportunity to study free at the University of Louisiana. Unusually, the foundation that Taylor set up carried out all the advocacy that led to the adoption of the TOPS programme and the passing of the law in 1989.

This story also reminds us that effective initiatives leading to lasting change can come from many different sources – in this case a staunch conservative.

### Working with informal groups

Many of the funders in these stories worked with inexperienced groups that lacked a formal structure. They did so because these groups seemed likely to bring about the kind of lasting change that they were looking for. But decisions to support these groups were taken with great care. The Brazil Human Rights Fund decided to support Mothers of May only after extensive research. They found out what kind of experience they had and evaluated the strategies they were putting forward. The fact that other human rights defenders in the country recognized the group's legitimacy 'helped to convince us that their proposal was worth supporting'.



Likewise, JRCT's decision to support the Carbon Tracker Initiative was by no means a blind 'leap of faith': JRCT carried out extensive due diligence. They were impressed by the track record of CTI's team members, and two members of the team were already known to them.

Many of the funders in these stories offer capacity building or mentoring as well as funding – what Avila Kilmurray calls 'added value' – which can help to ensure that inexperienced groups have the skills they need to carry out the work.

### The importance of analysis

All the funders in these stories attach great importance to having a good analysis of the problem before any action is taken. As we have seen, many carried out extensive consultations with those most affected. Others consulted widely with other players active in the field. Manuel Montes recounts how the Ford Foundation spent a year 'surveying the field, talking to academics and activists, and attending key events where discussions on development policies would take place' before developing the strategy for their International Economic Policy portfolio. Suzanne Siskel took a similar approach in the Philippines, consulting widely with 'education specialists, government and private sector leaders, and experts on many different aspects of the educational system'. 'I was new to the Philippines, I was not an expert in education,' she says. In the case of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, baseline studies and research across seven countries, followed by 'further investigation', 'helped the foundation conclude that of all the factors that determine a child's potential to learn and grow up healthy there was one that was not effectively addressed through the markets, through governments or by foundations – violence'.

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To achieve the kind of change that transforms the outlook of an entire society may take years. Funders seeking lasting change must be committed for the long term. They will also need to be prepared for frequent setbacks. This means being flexible and willing to adjust what they are doing as they go along. Having a good local partner will give funders an 'ear to the ground' and help them do this.

Funders must also be willing to live with uncertainty about outcomes: in the end there is no guarantee of ultimate success – hardly

surprising, given the complexity of the problems they are addressing and the great rewards if they are successful.

But all stories should speak for themselves. It's time for them to do so.

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## NASEEJ FOUNDATION, ARAB REGION

### Mobilizing collective effort to extend a local school



**Hania Aswad**

Sometimes – often – as a funder you have to take a chance and support something that is only an idea because that idea resonates with your own values and because new thinking and new solutions to old problems might come from anywhere. This is the story of how the Naseej Foundation supported a group of young activists to work with a village in Palestine to extend the local school ... and, in doing so, how they breathed new life into a practice fallen into disuse.

#### Key messages

- In selecting a grantee partner, shared values between the funder and the partner can be more important than the structure of the partner's organization and more crucial for the effect on the ground.
- Even a modest project can have a profound effect on community members' pride and sense of responsibility if they themselves devise the project.
- Ideas that produce social change don't have to be new. In this case, change was produced through breathing new life into an old idea.
- While they might not have the development jargon, the perfect professional look or the paper work, young people, if given the right opportunity and support, are capable of producing a sustainable impact.

**“Overall, across nations, the potential benefit of the larger community contributing to the welfare of individuals is huge. As is often said, ‘It takes a community to save a child.’”**

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### **Al Ouneh – a vanishing community asset**

‘Al Ouneh’ is a form of collective effort fully led by community members, both to help individuals in their own personal affairs and to further the well-being of the entire community. Also known as ‘al Fazaa’ and ‘al Tweeza’ in other countries, the concept has been familiar to people of the Middle East and North Africa region over generations. It can be used, for example, to support a neighbour with the costs of his daughter’s education or to construct an extra room for his house; it can also be used to help the community build a school, renovate a church, paint a mosque or harvest olives. Whatever the issue, the whole community share their assets and resources to make it happen, each within the limits of their ability. It is one of the region’s cultural assets and a successful form of community philanthropy.

Sadly, the past 20-30 years have witnessed the gradual disappearance of the practice and erosion of the values behind al Ouneh. As communities ‘modernize’ and individualism rises, with people relying increasingly on individual resources on the one hand and government on the other, faith in collective projects has dwindled. This represents a great loss to communities in terms of development, as demonstrated by the Ouneh project described here. Overall, across nations, the potential benefit of the larger community contributing to the welfare of individuals is huge. As is often said, ‘It takes a community to save a child.’

### **Ilina: towards the restoration of al Ouneh**

Among the applications following the Naseej Foundation’s first request for proposals was a project titled ‘al Ouneh’ submitted by an ‘informal youth group’ called ‘Ilina’ (‘Ours’ in English). Inspired by Naseej’s working principles and approaches, Ilina wanted to revive this concept through their project.

‘Ilina’ is a group of young Palestinian women and men formed in 2002 following the Israeli invasion of the Palestinian Authority’s ‘Area A’ of the West Bank. They were mostly between the last year of high school and early years of college, passionate, enthusiastic and loyal to their country and people. Following the ‘street festival’ they organized in Ramallah City a week after the Israeli army withdrew, they collectively agreed to dedicate most of their free time to doing community work. Over the seven years that followed, they organized and conducted many voluntary interventions, helping communities and organizations in various projects as well as creating their own.

### Looking at potential partners with open eyes

In some ways, Ilina was not an obvious choice for funding. They had no structure, no budget and no interest in media coverage. Moreover, their concept note didn't specify either the location/community or the types of activity the project would carry out. The project budget was no more than a tentative figure followed by some brief remarks indicating that the funds would mostly be spent on activities, with a small amount paid to a part-time coordinator and to cover some communication and transportation costs.

So why, out of the 370 applications our first request for proposals generated, did we include them in our shortlist? For three solid reasons: first, the project was underpinned by strong values; second, the group had a great reputation and strong competencies; third, it fitted with Naseej's asset-based community development (ABCD) approach and focus on community youth development.

Our choice also says something about the way the Naseej Foundation works. Requests for proposals (RFPs) are usually sector-based, focusing on health, women's rights, etc, with clear sets of outputs as indicators for success.

Naseej doesn't set priorities in terms of sector: community youth development depends on the quality of human beings, the quality of the human development process itself. Our emphasis is on the process of engaging the main stakeholders and enabling them gradually to take the lead in their own development. It's not that we don't see the urgency of particular issues; rather, we see the need for people and communities to be the decision makers.

Most grantmakers also specify what they expect in terms of a grantee organization – structure, experience, staff, etc. By contrast, Naseej's

#### Community youth development at the Naseej Foundation

This is a simple but profound approach, rooted in basic values and assumptions that have far-reaching implications. It involves a, holistic, 'relational' worldview, rooted in justice and compassion.

Naseej's approach to community youth development is enhanced by its Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) framework, which focuses on social assets and social relationships within communities and emphasizes the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches. Based on the principle of identifying, appreciating and mobilizing existing – but often unrecognized – community assets and building on them to create new opportunities, ABCD challenges needs-based approaches to community development by presenting a community-driven process.

**“It's not that we don't see the urgency of particular issues; rather, we see the need for people and communities to be the decision makers.”**

RFP encouraged groups and activities from outside the general run of formal organizations, which may not even look sustainable in market terms. For us, this illustrates what we think Naseej and its approach is all about: we fund grassroots initiatives that many mainstream funders would not consider. We are willing to take the risk of testing new, innovative initiatives and supporting sensitive issues not supported by many other donors or welcomed by governments, political parties or even communities – countering social justice violations, for example.

This is about challenging the mainstream funding culture, the common labelling of groups and CSOs according to their technical abilities. For many donors, having a computerized financial system and a well-refined, hierarchical organizational structure are key criteria for selecting grantees. For us it's important that staff should be involved in decision making; that beneficiaries should be taken into consideration when designing a programme. It's more about the values, practices and reputation; the ability to reach out to and engage beneficiaries; the social justice values throughout the whole project cycle.

### Forming a working relationship

Naseej puts a lot of time into working with the potential partner to develop the concept into a fully-fledged project and to ensure the underlying values are fully integrated into the practice. Our focus on innovation includes the way the grantee works, their flexibility to reach out to beneficiaries and respond to them. We prompt the partner to think of areas that they haven't thought of earlier – decision-making processes, level of engagement, ownership, sustainability, etc. We advise where needed and requested, but we don't attempt to influence the applicant. Only at the end of this stage does Naseej announce its final decision.

Here again, we are swimming against the tide, breaking the existing culture of relationships between donor and recipient. We tell potential grantees that we are looking for a true partnership, based on openness, honesty and equality; we all need each other to achieve change on the ground – the fact that we are providing the funds doesn't make us superior. But it's challenging for groups to share the challenges and setbacks encountered in implementation, and to believe that donors will understand and realize these are normal. Unsurprisingly, Ilina were cautious in their communications with us. As a group of young activists that had worked independently for

**“It's challenging for groups to share the challenges and setbacks encountered in implementation, and to believe that donors will understand and realize these are normal.”**

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years, they feared major interference from us. But by the end of the 'selection process', both Naseej and Ilna felt more satisfied with the project and comfortable in the partnership.

### Modifying the original plan – the selection of Deir Ibzee'

During this development stage, Ilna modified the original idea in two respects. First, they made assessment visits to a number of villages around Ramallah City in order to make a more informed choice of location for the project rather than randomly selecting the locality. Deir Ibzee', a small marginalized village west of Ramallah City with an estimated total population of 1,200 people (in 2006), was the community selected. Second, they came to recognize the importance of respecting the local community and its institutions and valuing their voices in order to gradually develop community ownership and, crucially, encourage local leadership. Once the locality had been selected, meetings with local people were held.

**“While boys were given the freedom to choose whether to attend their last year at school, many parents decided not to put their daughters at daily risk.”**

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The main gap collectively identified and agreed upon by the village was the inability of village girls to finish their high school education. The increasing number of students was straining the capacity of the local school, so, over the past nearly two decades, parents had arranged for their sons and daughters to attend their last year of high school (12th grade) at a nearby village. As the political situation in the West Bank worsened, Israeli settlers' aggression towards Palestinians increased and further restrictions on movement were imposed by the Israeli army, including checkpoints and blockades. While boys were given the freedom to choose whether to attend their last year at school, many parents decided not to put their daughters at daily risk. As a result, by 2006 most of the Deir Ibzee' girls had had their high school education curtailed.

Ilna members put forward the idea of using the revived al Ouneh concept to tackle the problem. This was met with enthusiasm and excitement by the villagers, especially the elderly, who were acquainted with 'al Ouneh' and saw the potential benefits of this collective approach. Ilna members and young people from the village decided to organize a voluntary summer camp where young people from various cities from the West Bank could contribute to the project. More than 30 young people responded to the open announcement sent out by Ilna and its supporters; they came from cities and communities around Hebron, Bethlehem, Jenin, Nablus and Ramallah. Over a period of two weeks, the village youth, Ilna members and the 30 volunteers built the extra classroom and



renovated the premises as a whole. Inspired by this, community members and volunteers carried out other activities such as cleaning and planting the village cemetery, painting streets and sidewalks, and clearing empty land.

Many of the older members of the community worked hand in hand with the young volunteers and provided their technical expertise on various parts of the work. The village community shared the responsibility of providing meals and clean water for the volunteers throughout the two weeks of the camp and beyond, as some stayed for at least another week to do other types of work.



Over a period of two weeks, the village youth, Ilna members and the 30 volunteers built the extra classroom and renovated the premises as a whole.



Once the classroom was constructed and the work at the school was concluded, Ilna members together with a few community members visited the Palestinian Ministry of Education (MOE) and demanded their support in bringing this collective dream to reality. The MOE were extremely impressed and thus very responsive, committing themselves to securing the required teachers as well as all other relevant material and budget.



**“The Deir Ibzee’ Ouneh brought a community and a country closer together.”**

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### So far ...

To date, eight classes have graduated from Deir Ibzee’ Girls School and the ninth is on its way. More than 288 female students received their high school diploma between 2007 and 2014. The women of Deir Ibzee’ have set up a kitchen for the school to provide healthy food for students. Young people from the village in cooperation with the village council and other villagers provide maintenance work for the school and within the village. The project idea has spread and two more al Ouneh youth groups have subsequently been established, one in Hebron and one in Nablus.

The Deir Ibzee’ Ouneh brought a community and a country closer together. Those involved walked away with a greater sense of responsibility for their local community and their country as a whole. It is not only that a minimum of 35 young girls will graduate from high school every year: all those who had a hand in this project will carry its principles wherever they go and for as long as they live. There is great potential for the Ouneh approach to spread much more widely. We have worked with groups in other countries on the idea of collective awareness and collective work – and this could also lead to the establishment of community foundations, the very essence of asset based community development. We see groups that have continued working in similar ways, but we have also seen groups that couldn’t continue because of challenges from donors and governments.

The issue is how to apply social justice principles and rights-based approaches in the development field. We discuss this with activists and civil society representatives at national and regional convenings. In addition, we’re developing a network of people committed to social justice principles at community level and we’re discussing development of a manifesto.

### **‘Every door they fixed, every wall they painted ...’**

‘Naseej opened our eyes and hearts to the crucial concept of “community ownership”. We as young activists demand our right to be engaged but tend to forget that it is also the right of others we work with and for. As they were truly engaged, the Deir Ibzee’ youth and community felt they owned every part of the class, every door they fixed, every wall they painted, every tree they planted. I have no doubt that such powerful feelings are what will sustain the project and maintain the spirit for years and for generations to come.’

*Yara Odeh, Ilina group member*

One big problem is Naseej's limited resources. Our model is not well understood or appreciated; many donors see social justice principles, and the idea of grantees feeling themselves equal to the grantors, as threatening. Another issue is that many wealthy donors are encouraging 'paid volunteerism', through support of civil society organizations that provide services, while we are trying to encourage young people and communities to contribute, to be engaged, to have ownership. So the potential is great but the challenges are greater.

#### Key facts

**Grant amount:** USD\$40,000

**Grant period:** 8 months in 2007

**Other support:** on-the-job training on project and financial management, and capacity building for some group members on CYD and ABCD concepts

**Biggest achievements:** enabling girls to finish their high school education and revival of a great cultural concept

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#### For more information

[www.naseej-cyd.org/en/index.php](http://www.naseej-cyd.org/en/index.php)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VwKQXMCVN0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VwKQXMCVN0)

## FIKRA, TUNISIA

### Supporting the ideas and aspirations of local communities



**Atallah Kuttub**

**The Arab Spring unleashed a wave of hope and aspiration across North Africa and the Middle East. As local communities struggled to give form to these hopes and to take charge of their destinies, sympathetic external funders faced a problem: how could they support the first without undermining the second? This is an account of how a fund established by four European foundations has become an agent of change in Tunisia by offering support to local communities in developing their own resources and fulfilling their own aspirations rather than directing them in doing so.**

#### Key messages

- Trusting in the ideas of local communities, building on local assets, and investing in communities can bring lasting change in the lives of those communities.
- Lack of local knowledge need not prevent involvement. Establishing Fikra to manage a pooled fund enabled four European funders without local knowledge to support individuals and communities in north-west Tunisia.
- The importance of capacity building: Fikra's fundamental aim is empowerment of local people and communities so they can effect lasting change in their own lives. To achieve this, they spend a quarter of their resources on capacity building.

### Tunisia before the Arab Spring

By 2010, a long period of dictatorship in Tunisia had resulted in police repression, mass imprisonment and increased poverty – and most of all in social and economic injustice. But in that year, the social movement began that was to trigger the wave of uprisings across the region known as the Arab Spring, with people throughout the country uniting under the slogan ‘bread, liberty, social justice’.

Following the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011, many European countries and organizations wanted to support communities in the region. Donations, grants and civil society training programmes proliferated. I was involved in mobilizing funds to support the budding initiatives of young people across the region to maintain the momentum of change and saw first-hand what was happening. Often useful and always well-intentioned, many of those initiatives were based on a short-term analysis of the situation and did not answer the real objective of the Tunisian uprising: social justice.

### The idea and the approach

By contrast, the Tunisia Joint Fund, which became known as Fikra, focuses explicitly on socioeconomic justice, which it sees as a foundation not only for democracy but also for the empowerment of people. In April 2013, Fondation de France, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, King Baudouin Foundation and Robert Bosch Stiftung came together to form Fikra, under the umbrella of the Brussels-based Network of European Foundations. They agreed that they wanted to support initiatives on the ground without imposing preconceived projects of their own and they set up Fikra as a mechanism to manage their pooled funding. Their aim was to support communities who were mobilized by the Arab Spring to effect lasting change in their lives on the basis of justice, dignity and citizenship. After careful consultation, they decided to work in north-west Tunisia, the poorest region in the country, because of its extreme climate, poverty and widely dispersed population.

Fikra thus serves as the intermediary between local communities and international sources of funds. In future it is hoped that Fikra will also receive funds from local donors. Fikra’s thesis is that if local donors, including diaspora, and social activists are equipped with the knowledge and strategic funding opportunities, coupled with local engagement, Tunisian society will become more equitable and empowered. ‘Fikra means idea in Arabic, and we see ourselves as an ideas incubator. We look for ideas that are germinating in the citizens of the four regions we work in,’ says Fikra’s director, Amina Ben

“Fikra means idea in Arabic, and we see ourselves as an ideas incubator. We look for ideas that are germinating in the citizens of the four regions we work in.”

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Fadhi. 'Our strategy is to transform these ideas into realistic and sustainable projects.'

**"Fikra's beneficiaries are those who are difficult to reach and who cannot access other sources of funding – women in the rural areas, newly created NGOs, young unemployed people."**

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Essentially, Fikra's beneficiaries are those who are difficult to reach and who cannot access other sources of funding – women in the rural areas, newly created NGOs, young unemployed people. Fikra provides mentoring and training and offers grants for community projects ranging from promoting traditional artisanal crafts to creating sources of income for rural women and support for unemployed graduates in the region. It adjusts its training to the needs of local communities, spending almost 25 per cent of its budget on capacity building. Many projects support social entrepreneurs; others involve animal husbandry, agriculture, education, the environment, cultural initiatives in schools, and health. Fikra encourages people to cooperate among each other and to mobilize local resources so that they own the agenda rather than relying on international funding.

#### **'The inspiration to take risks'**

'I have come away with the inspiration to take risks in my life and venture into oil pressing, which is much needed by farmers in my community. Fikra created a new person from me.'

These are the words of a villager from Jendouba in north-west Tunisia, the recipient of a grant from Fikra, a joint fund which, following the turmoil of the Arab Spring, took the decision to trust in the ideas of local communities and invest in supporting them.

While the emphasis is on trusting local communities to know best what will benefit them, this doesn't mean they are given 'a blank cheque', emphasizes Françoise Pissart of King Baudouin Foundation, chair of Fikra. 'Individuals with good ideas that will benefit their community are invited to submit a proposal to Fikra and the best are selected by an independent jury composed of Tunisian experts,' she explains. 'Between the first step and the implementation of any concrete initiative, Fikra supports collective training and individual coaching; the steering committee then decides on a small grant, to be considered as seed money to launch the planned activities.' Nevertheless, 'from the very beginning we accepted the need to take risks and to learn by doing, from our successes and our mistakes.'

#### **What has Fikra achieved?**

It is early days but, says Françoise Pissart, 'Fikra is beginning to be recognized as a promising approach that could be scaled up and strengthened through partnerships with other public or private



**“Our experience has shown that we don’t need to spend an enormous amount of money to make a difference: even small grants can change the lives of families and small villages.”**

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partners. Our experience has shown that we don’t need to spend an enormous amount of money to make a difference: even small grants can change the lives of families and small villages.’

Since Fikra was set up in 2013, 44 projects have been funded. They are very closely monitored by Amina Ben Fadl, says Pissart, and an impact evaluation will be carried out after three years. In the meantime, Fikra’s success is best illustrated through the stories of its beneficiaries, which illustrate how living conditions have improved and communities have been mobilized to build on the assets they already have.

### **Bringing producers together**

Sonia Abaydi was a local entrepreneur from Jandouba who had access to markets and knew the tastes of handicrafts lovers and consumers. Rahmah Jaouadi and Ichrak Gharbi led women’s groups that produced handicrafts in Jandouba and Beja respectively but lacked access to markets, so their incomes were low. Similarly, Haykal Abidi, a bee entrepreneur from Jandouba, knew the local markets for honey and other bee products, while Hosni Abdelbakri in Beja and members of his community association kept bees but lacked marketing skills. In both cases, Fikra brought producers and marketing skills together, resulting in higher incomes for the community groups.

### **Community assets, community ownership**

The construction of a community water source in Jandouba provides what Ben Fadhi calls ‘a perfect illustration of how Fikra works’, since it involves local people working together and the exchange of know-how. Nejib Ouerghi mobilized the members of a fringe community in Jandouba for the construction of a water source from a nearby spring.



**Nejib Ouerghi's completed water project.**

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The programme provided a small part of the project costs (for materials) and the villagers provided all the labour themselves. Samira Median, also from Jandouba, wanted to bring piped water to her own community. Fikra linked Samira to Nejib so she could benefit from his experience. Under this approach, the villagers own the water systems because they have built them, and since they have built them, they will be able to maintain them in the future.

In a second phase, also supported by Fikra, and to consolidate the water project, Nejib will work on creating vegetable gardens around the water source to help the inhabitants achieve food sufficiency.



Fikra Kamal Aoudi's household chicken project.

### A principle of increase

Kamal Aoudi's household chicken project in Beja builds on solidarity and cooperation among community members. Traditionally, aid money is used to buy chickens for families to help them create income-generating projects. Kamal has added a new component where recipient families donate part of their profits (money from the sale of chickens and eggs, or newly hatched chickens) to a community pool that is

used help new poor families to raise chickens and join the ranks of the producers. In this way, the project not only sustains itself, but it grows without the need for additional donor funds.

### Culture in support of education

Several of the projects have a cultural dimension. The inhabitants of the small village of Bargou, for instance, restored an open-air theatre so that shows and other events could be staged. A cultural caravan is travelling across the Kef region, visiting schools in villages where there are no extra-curricular activities for primary school children aged 6 to 12. 'Many of these schools are ill-equipped,' says Amina Ben Fadhi. 'These students have never seen a computer in their lives. On Saturday mornings, they come to school and participate in activities such as puppet making, puppet shows, photography, art and film.' The people conducting these sessions are typically young unemployed artists from the region. Another benefit is that, since the students have

been engaged in weekly cultural activities, their grades have improved by at least 18 per cent.

### What remains to be done?

Fikra's funders are committed for the long haul, says Françoise Pissart. 'In the first months following the Arab Spring, many European donors showed their interest in contributing actively to the democratic transition in Tunisia. Today, it seems more and more difficult, even dangerous, to stay active in Tunisia. However, it is not the right time to give up. More than ever, the democratic transition needs social and economic justice.'

But NGOs in Tunisia depend almost exclusively on foreign funding because there is little or no local philanthropy, and this is in itself a problem: if development is to be sustainable, local philanthropy must be stimulated. In 2012, I tried to get Arab philanthropists to match the donations of the four European foundations and expand support for the Arab Spring beyond Tunisia. That effort did not succeed because of the lack of readiness among Arab donors. This is the main challenge that Fikra is now working on.

Establishing a community foundation might be one option. 'We are open to enlarging our steering group with new European contributors,' says Françoise Pissart. 'If the funds available were greater, we would think seriously about developing a philanthropic infrastructure in the region like a community foundation. We are also exploring new ways to involve the Tunisian diaspora.'

**Atallah Kuttub** is founder and chairman of SAANED for Philanthropy Advisory. Email [akuttub@saaned.com](mailto:akuttub@saaned.com)

### For more information

[www.fikra-tounisiya.org](http://www.fikra-tounisiya.org)

### Key facts

**Sonia Ibidhi (bringing producers together)**

**Grant amount:** €12,000

**Start date:** June 2015

**Other support:** capacity building

**Nejib Ouerghi project (constructing a community water source)**

**Grant amount:** €7,700

**Grant period:** April-June 2014

**Other support:** capacity building

**Kamel Aoudi (household chicken project)**

**Grant amount:** €10,000

**Start date:** June 2015

**Other support:** capacity building



## WEBB MEMORIAL TRUST, UK

### Giving children a voice on poverty



**Barry Knight**

#### Key messages

- Some of the most marginalized in society were given a voice and encouraged to participate in discussing how their society should run.
- Children were not just consulted; they took a real lead.
- The adults involved were fully convinced of the value of children's views.
- The work did not proceed according to a cut-and-dried theory of change; the process was very flexible.

Despite many efforts over the years, child poverty remains a widespread problem in the UK. Public support for the issue has drained away and anti-poverty groups have lost their way. In an attempt to break the logjam, the Webb Memorial Trust decided to support efforts to make the voices of children themselves heard. This story covers four years of activity, from an initial grant to support a children's conference in 2011 through to the launch of the Children's Manifesto in Parliament in October 2014 and a major conference in March 2015. One important result was to raise awareness about the value of children's views. Another was to challenge our stereotypes of what children can do if they are given the chance.

## Child poverty in the UK

In the UK, a powerful lobby of interests concerned with child poverty has existed for 50 years. An interconnected web of charities and political organizations monitor annual statistics on child poverty and pressure the government to do more to ensure that every child matters and has the opportunity to live a flourishing life.

Over the years, the child poverty lobby has been successful in improving the quality of life for many children. But in recent years, the debate about child poverty has become, according to one foundation leader, 'angry and fruitless'. Child poverty remains a widespread problem in the UK.

## The Webb Memorial Trust's agenda



The launch of the Poverty Manifesto at the Houses of Parliament on 15 October 2014.

The goal of the Webb Memorial Trust is to rethink and reframe how to tackle poverty so that others may advance solutions to the problem. As a small educational trust, our role is to produce educational materials showing how things might be different, and to open up discussion and debate that eventually lead to social progress on structural issues that lead to poverty and destitution.

The work of the Trust fits well with a social justice agenda. The persistence of poverty in a modern, wealthy democracy is, according to our research, seen as unfair by the vast majority of the population. In the story that follows, the key concept for us is 'empowerment'. Our aim is to achieve social justice through increasing the social, economic and political strength of those who have been marginalized in society. So for us the goal here is to give a voice to these individuals and groups, to enable them to participate, to be part of the process – rather than any specific outcome that might be achieved through the process of participation.

It would be wonderful to claim that the Trust's work on children's empowerment unfolded as the result of a crystal-clear theory of change that was implemented as part of a rigorous top-down plan with built-in evaluations at various stages. But this would be far from the truth. The programme evolved organically in response to conversations about applications, chance meetings, and opportunities that emerged. Work with children's voices

“Children North East suggested that children should play a part in the conference – both in preparing for it and on the day itself. We were unsure about this, but we went along with it.”

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began almost by accident and was fitted into the Trust’s wider agenda to investigate what a good society without poverty would look like from many different perspectives.

### The story begins

It started in a café. Representatives from the Trust met people from a children’s charity based in the North East of England, Children North East, to discuss their request for a small grant to celebrate their 120th anniversary. They wanted to bring a big-name speaker from London for an evening lecture. The theme was to be that, despite popular belief, child poverty is not a thing of the past.

But we questioned whether an evening lecture would have the desired impact and offered a larger grant for a full day’s conference to enable more extensive discussion. For their part, Children North East suggested that children should play a part in the conference – both in preparing for it and on the day itself. We were unsure about this, but we went along with it.

The conference was a success, and there was widespread agreement that the standout contributions came from the children. One of these was a photographic exhibition based on the work of 1,328 children from across the North East, each of whom was given a disposable camera to document and record their lives. The other was a play, *Hope’s Diary*, about a 12-year-old girl whose dreams of advancement were everywhere constrained by lack of money.

There was immediate demand for the exhibition and the play from a wide variety of organizations. The play, featuring young actors from the North East, was shown in Parliament and had a strong emotional effect on the Members of Parliament who saw it.

Another positive outcome of the conference was the development of an online resource on ‘poverty proofing’ schools. Two years later, 27 schools in the region had registered to take part. Schoolchildren took action to deal with the problem of fly tipping (illegal dumping of waste) in their communities. With financial support from the Trust, Children North East developed Hopebook. This works like Facebook. You become friends with Hope, who posts about her life and experiences. You can play interactive games which highlight the obstacles faced by children growing up in poverty. The goal is to stimulate discussion of poverty among children using a medium that they already use.

## Scaling up

In a different part of its work on poverty, the Trust decided to support the All Party Parliamentary Group on Poverty. Poverty is a contentious issue politically. The consensus that led to all party support for the Child Poverty Act 2010 crumbled almost as soon as the Act was passed. A division opened up between those who believe that the state is responsible for ending poverty and those who believe that the responsibility lies with individuals.

To make progress, two trustees of the Webb Memorial Trust, Kate Green MP (Labour) and Chris White MP (Conservative), wrote a helpful article in the *New Statesman* (27 February 2012) acknowledging that ‘all parties have fallen short of their goals when it comes to reducing poverty’ and that now was a good time to start building ‘a new politics’.

Kate Green then became chair and Chris White vice chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Poverty, while I, as director of the Webb Memorial Trust, became adviser. We developed a programme of work that aimed to produce areas of agreement between the parties. We decided to focus on the role of business in reducing poverty, the role of civil society in reducing poverty, and children’s views on reducing poverty. All of these areas were ‘safe’ politically in the sense that there were no clear dividing lines that would mess up the process.

This focus was ideal for the Trust as an educational charity. It offered a new way of approaching the issue of poverty, rejecting the blame game played by anti-poverty campaigners and seeking solutions that would work for everyone.

Early discussions within the All Party Parliamentary Group suggested that a ‘Children’s Manifesto on Poverty’ would be a useful device to harness the views of children. This could be prepared in advance of the 2015 general election and be used in a non-partisan way to tell politicians what tomorrow’s voters thought about the issues.

The Trust had no expertise in participative work with children, so we talked to people with expertise in this area about how to approach this. We wanted to work with people who would be able to help children express their views, but without interfering with the content of what they wanted to express. In the event, a team of two people led the work, Sara Bryson and Rys Farthing, and Children North East received the grant.

“We decided to focus on the role of business in reducing poverty, the role of civil society in reducing poverty, and children’s views on reducing poverty.”

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Launch of the Poverty Manifesto in October 2014.



### Poverty ends now

Thirty-eight young people contributed to writing the manifesto, based on the work of a wider group of 180 young people who met between 2012 and 2014. The children came from five areas of England – all with longstanding problems of poverty and deprivation. Children and young people did all of the work; though adults were on hand to offer guidance, they were careful not to control decisions.

The work culminated in a document called *Poverty ends now* (PEN). The name was chosen because the young people felt that it was commanding, short and catchy for social media purposes and also because the PEN acronym matched what they were doing – writing.

To implement their findings, the children planned three national actions: a launch of their manifesto in parliament, tabling parliamentary questions and writing an evidence submission, and undertaking a national media campaign. The All Party Parliamentary Group provided a forum for the national work.

The children also planned six local actions based on the six themes that emerged as central to young people's concerns: decent incomes in Liverpool, affordable housing in London, equality at school in the North East, healthy food in Gateshead, feeling safe in Manchester, and public transport in Newcastle.

The manifesto's six principles were derived from the life experiences of the young people. Unlike many people who write about poverty,

young people ‘tell it straight’ based on their own authentic experience and emotional connection with the issue as opposed to detached thought.

“The document also reflects the fact that children see things differently from adults. They lack the theoretical baggage that adults tend to carry, avoiding quibbles about the best definition of poverty.”

The document also reflects the fact that children see things differently from adults. They lack the theoretical baggage that adults tend to carry, avoiding quibbles about the best definition of poverty. Instead they tend to focus on immediate, concrete things like the lack of food in the fridge, the inability to go on school trips, or the embarrassment of bringing friends home to a flat with rising damp. Things that have little place in the poverty debate among adults, such as love from parents or caring for pets, are very important to children. They also feel that whatever is wrong should be fixed now. The title of their manifesto, *Poverty ends now*, speaks to an immediacy that is rarely present in the policy debates of adults.

#### The six principles of the Children’s Manifesto on Poverty

- 1 A minimum standard of living, not just surviving, for every family in Britain
- 2 An equal schools experience for all
- 3 Affordable, decent homes for everyone
- 4 Access to three affordable, healthy meals a day for every young person
- 5 A feeling of safety within their communities and at home for everyone
- 6 Affordable transport for all young people everywhere

#### What has been achieved?

One of the most valuable outcomes of the project was that it raised awareness among decision makers such as police commissioners, councillors and voluntary sector people about the value of young people’s views. As Rys Farthing commented in a project report:

‘You could see the decision makers present ... slowly coming around to the realisation that these young people were “key stakeholders” (their words) in decisions they’d be making for a while now, and that their views were incredibly important.’

#### ... at the local level

All of the local projects were successful in raising awareness about the value of young people’s views. In Liverpool, for example, young people developed a play called *Brass Razoo*, performed to a full house in November 2014. Trade unions saw the potential of using the play to promote discussion of the issues and gave the group financial support to enable a second performance at a 1,000-person capacity theatre. In

Manchester, the police commissioner worked with the group of young people on issues ranging from sexual exploitation to park lighting. In the North East, on the advice of their local MP, the group conducted a questionnaire in their own schools and colleges to gather evidence about the impact of poverty in schools. They spoke to over 1,000 local young people, analysed the findings and organized a local evidence session with 60 regional decision makers. They presented their findings to the chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, Alan Milburn. The group has now been offered funding by the North East Child Poverty Commission to continue meeting over the next year to act as a shadow youth board of the commission as well as continuing their work on the manifesto priorities. All local events engaged local councillors, MPs, teachers and others in their activities and events, and attracted local press coverage.

“There is a risk that much effort can go into supporting events and actions of this kind, but that messages, while listened to at the time, have little effect on policy or practice.”

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#### ... and nationally

Nationally, the work raised awareness of the issues, though there is less evidence of lasting outcomes. *Poverty ends now* was launched on 15 October 2014 at the Houses of Parliament. Young people presented the report to a large audience of young people and some MPs and peers, and engaged in a formal questioning of three MPs, one from each of the three main political parties. Although the event was highly successful and had a positive effect on the confidence of the young people, there was no sense that any action would be taken as a result of the work. There is a risk that much effort can go into supporting events and actions of this kind, but that messages, while listened to at the time, have little effect on policy or practice.

The problem of adult responses to children was also evident at a conference organized, with Trust support, by the Fabian Society and Bright Blue on 2 March 2015. The conference was opened by a series of moving monologues by eight young people from Merseyside, immediately followed by a panel consisting of members of parliament from Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties. Not one of these speakers mentioned the young people's contribution; instead they moved into a pre-prepared analysis of the problem of poverty. The fourth speaker on the panel, who used to be part of a gang, said that unless politicians listened to young people, they were doing themselves and the country a disservice and the kinds of issues he had experienced in his life would recur in the next generation.

## Participation and power

This brings us to the vexed question of participation and power: people may be able to take part in political processes, but it does not follow that they have any power to change things.

For a small grantmaking charity, it may be hubris to think that we can bring about large structural changes in attitudes and behaviour with a series of small or medium-sized grants. Nor can we claim huge results from the process to date. But the process has started and the idea that children have nothing to contribute to political processes has been challenged. The key thing is to continue the process and to build on what has been learned. Efforts to empower politically marginalized groups need to be measured in decades because embedded attitudes and behaviours form large structural barriers. It is the job of all of us to dismember them. The lesson from this brief study is that children do not believe such barriers should be there at all.

### Key facts

**Amount spent:** £119,310 + £230 expenses

**Grant period:** January 2011 – March 2015

**Other support:** nothing but keeping in touch, meeting for coffee and trying to be supportive by staying out of the way and letting them get on with it

**Biggest achievement:** as the children grow older, they wish to use their experiences to train other children to take their place in attempting to get their voices heard

**Barry Knight** is director of the Webb Memorial Trust. Email [barryknight@cranehouse.eu](mailto:barryknight@cranehouse.eu)

### For more information

Our research [www.webbmemorialtrust.org.uk/publications/the-society-we-want-2](http://www.webbmemorialtrust.org.uk/publications/the-society-we-want-2)

Children North East [www.children-ne.org.uk](http://www.children-ne.org.uk)

Hope's Diary [www.culturecode.co.uk/projects/hope](http://www.culturecode.co.uk/projects/hope)

Online resource on 'poverty proofing' schools  
[www.povertyproofing.co.uk](http://www.povertyproofing.co.uk)

Hopebook [www.adayofhope.co.uk](http://www.adayofhope.co.uk)

Poverty ends now [www.appgpoverty.org.uk/children/poverty-ends-now-anti-poverty-manifesto-written-by-young-people](http://www.appgpoverty.org.uk/children/poverty-ends-now-anti-poverty-manifesto-written-by-young-people)



## INDONESIA FOR HUMANITY

### Land and recognition in Sidomukti: a community's struggle to overcome the legacy of authoritarianism



**Kamala Chandrakirana**

For almost 20 years, Indonesia has struggled to transform itself from an authoritarian past under a military regime called the 'New Order' (1966-98). For 32 years, acts of repression and violence had been justified in the name of economic growth and political stability. Indonesia for Humanity (IKA) has begun working with communities that were victims of such gross human rights violations by accessing a government programme designed to achieve 'inclusive development'. Sidomukti, located inside a palm oil plantation, is one such community trying to secure government recognition of its people's land and rightful status as a self-standing village.

#### Key messages

- There is power in numbers – hence the importance of community organizing. The farmers' group succeeded in reclaiming 800,000 square meters of land before IKA even came on the scene.
- Initiatives that can help small groups to link and make common cause are often the most effective way of using small amounts of money.
- Injustices thrive on isolation and ignorance. When groups that have been kept apart come together, they begin to recognize and respond to each other.
- Philanthropy for social justice is not always about opposing government. The partnership between IKA and the government was key to success here.

### Losing land and village for palm oil

'My wooden shack was demolished to the ground. Our farm land was taken from us. We were evicted like chickens. In fact chickens have it better, as they are provided with a coop for shelter. From then on, we have carried out this struggle to take back our land .... [Otherwise] where will my children live? I have joined the struggle for my children and grandchildren.'

*Syamsiah, 76 years old*

Syamsiah lives in a village located inside a palm oil plantation in North Sumatera, Indonesia. She is recounting her experience of 45 years ago when she and her community were forcibly evicted from their homes and land. The eviction was particularly traumatic, not only because of the violence and mass disappearances but also because it occurred on the heels of a nationwide anti-communist pogrom in the latter half of the 1960s, in which an estimated half a million people were killed and tens of thousands arrested without trial. Till this day, impunity prevails.

The land was handed over to a palm oil company but the community continued to regard it as theirs. Before the New Order, Syamsiah and her fellow villagers had received a certificate legalizing their tenure inside this plantation area. However, the local government took these documents away from them after the eviction. Those who objected were threatened as 'communists', which became illegal under the New Order regime.



Farmers' homes with dead palm trees in the background.

### Reclaiming Sidomukti

The resignation of the New Order's President Soeharto in 1998 marked the beginning of a new era of political openness. Syamsiah and other members of her community formed a farmers' group which, with support from civil society organizations advocating for agrarian reform and farmers' rights, has succeeded in reclaiming approximately 800,000 square meters in which 165 households currently live and work. They consider this their village and have named it Sidomukti, which means lasting prosperity.

Now the villagers are seeking formal recognition of their tenure. In 2009 they took their case to court. The case was rejected by the local courts, and now it is being reviewed by the Indonesian Supreme Court. Meanwhile, frustration with the legal process has resulted in outbreaks of violence in Sidomukti. The farmers' group has asked the Governor of North Sumatera and Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights to help mediate their concerns with the palm oil company, which has high-level political backing in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital city. Civil society efforts to push for a national policy on agrarian reform continue but with little real progress so far.

### The role of IKA

**“As an activists’ foundation, we have no money of our own. We operate through public fundraising and by regranting in collaboration with a wide variety of donor institutions.”**

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Indonesia for Humanity (Indonesia untuk Kemanusiaan or IKA) is an activist-initiated grantmaking foundation. It was quietly created 20 years ago under an authoritarian regime in order to support pro-democracy activism and human rights advocacy. Through small grants, IKA has continued to provide support for social movements working to transform violence and structural injustices. As an activists’ foundation, we have no money of our own. We operate through public fundraising and by regranting in collaboration with a wide variety of donor institutions.

In 2014, IKA decided to improve its reach and influence by joining a national coalition of 50 civil society organizations and victim groups, the National Coalition for Justice and Truth. Through this coalition, we were introduced to several victim communities in villages and towns around the archipelago.

We accessed a government programme called Peduli, which engages civil society groups to advance ‘inclusive development’. The government’s agreement to assign Peduli resources to the politically stigmatized victim communities was a milestone in itself. It marked the first time an Indonesian government body gave recognition to this group of people who had been systematically discriminated against by state and society for decades.

IKA works on the assumption that the goals of social justice and lasting peace require long-term work at many levels: from empowering local communities to influencing national policy-making and enforcing the rule of law and human rights. Our participation in the Peduli programme has enabled us to make grants to organizations working at the local, district and national levels in a synchronized way and as part of a national movement to end impunity and fulfil the rights of victims of past human rights violations.

In partnership with local organizations from the coalition and with the North Sumatera Chapter of the Association of Victims and Their Families, Syamsiah's community was one of the communities we supported under the Peduli programme.

### Challenges for the grantmaker

In the work for transformative change, painful as it is, the chain of failures is mostly unsurprising and probably necessary as stepping stones towards that slow shifting of the ground in the way communities, nations and states conduct their business.

**“The most immediate challenge is obtaining the resources necessary to continue despite the setbacks, building on achievements while learning from failures. Such resources are few and far between.”**

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Many feel that addressing past human rights violations in Indonesia is too politically controversial and economically inconvenient. Cases have failed and will continue to fail in court. Victims who speak out and organize are stigmatized, intimidated and at times physically attacked by those who feel threatened by their voices. Civil society groups working for victims' rights have only a fraction of the resources, skills and knowledge needed for the complex work with poor, traumatized victim communities. Many feel that what IKA is trying to do is too difficult and complex and that it will take too long to see the fruits of all this labour. But for IKA and the National Coalition for Justice and Truth, this is not a matter of choice but a collective responsibility.

The most immediate challenge is obtaining the resources necessary to continue despite the setbacks, building on achievements while learning from failures. Such resources are few and far between, which is why accessing the Peduli programme has proved a valuable opportunity.

### Working with the community

In the one year of IKA's involvement in the Peduli programme, it has made a range of grants to support Syamsiah's community. Locally, grants were made to the North Sumatera-based association of victims. These funded activities designed to increase victims' access to public services, develop the community's economic assets, support community life and advance acceptance of the community by the wider society. The association itself received direct support to strengthen its governance system and to build its technical capacities, particularly in financial management and programme monitoring and evaluation.

### Activities funded by IKA grants

#### Grants to the North Sumatera victims' association allowed the organization to:

- facilitate a series of dialogues between the community and the district government, which is responsible for public service delivery
- assist in the creation of a community-led project to build a village market where villagers can sell their agricultural produce
- set up a cultural centre in the village of Sidomukti
- develop a relationship with a sustainable agriculture support facility in the provincial capital

#### Grants made by IKA to the National Coalition for Justice and Truth have supported activities such as:

- convening a national meeting of victim groups and human rights advocates to develop a new strategy for the next decade
- a dialogue with national legal experts, concerned politicians, media leaders, academics and teachers in order to expand the support base for victims's rights
- a cultural event involving young rock musicians to build a collective memory of past violations among the young generation
- trainings for victim communities from different parts of the country on community organizing and psycho-social healing

Nationally, grants have been made to other members of the National Coalition for Justice and Truth to address the human rights abuses suffered by Syamsiah's community and others in similar circumstances.

### Laying the foundations for a new approach: the first year of grantmaking

By accessing the government's Peduli programme, IKA has secured the integration of the struggles of Syamsiah's local community into the work of Indonesia's largest civil society alliance advocating for victims' rights and combating impunity for gross human rights violations occurring over a period of four decades (1965-2005). This is a new approach which can be viewed as a post-authoritarian transition justice initiative from the bottom up, citizen led and linking victims' civil political rights to their economic, social and cultural rights.

At the community level, as a result of the dialogues between Syamsiah's community leaders and the district government, the stigmatized and marginalized villagers have been able to access existing public services, particularly in the area of primary healthcare. Through these dialogues, Syamsiah's community came to understand that the local providers of public services had been afraid of entering the village because it was considered a controversial place and because they feared the powerful corporate owners of the palm oil plantation. The opening of communications paved the way for the first ever visit to the village by the nearest government health clinic as part of its outreach programme. This was an emotional event for both the health providers and the villagers, as it broke a wall of isolation and distrust that had divided them for decades. Now, the local health clinic makes monthly visits to Syamsiah's community.





The market built with the grant money. The sign shows support from the government.

The new village market was much welcomed by neighbouring villages. Local civil servants, who would never have lingered in this community, also frequent the market. Eventually, buyers started to come from the city, and now the villagers are selling direct to them as well. This year, 2015, when the community commemorated six years of living in the reclaimed land, there was much excitement when the local government came to inaugurate the market.



The small cultural centre, equipped with a simple traditional gamelan orchestra, has provided space for the community to come together socially. An old community practice of traditional dancing has been revived, and a dance troupe comprising villagers who were often at odds with each other in the managing of their reclaimed land meets regularly at the centre.

In Jakarta, the National Coalition for Justice and Truth sees the local community organizing as complementary to the legal advocacy efforts for the fulfilment of victims' rights, especially given the slow progress in legal justice and political accounting of the nation's violent past.



## What will the future bring?

The grants made by IKA this year have effectively brought together groups that work on community development and those working on legal advocacy, ending a decades-long segregation of these two pathways for change. In this way, the initiative has further strategic value for civil society as a whole. However, a complex grantmaking approach like this can work only with strong leadership across the board at national and local levels and with organizations that are willing to work together in accountable ways. It also assumes that IKA's embeddedness in the movement continues to be secure and credible.

## Key facts

### Grant to the North Sumatera victims' association

**Grant amount:** US\$42,500

**Grant period:** August 2014 to August 2015

**Other support:** capacity building and opportunities to share and exchange experiences with others around the country

**Biggest achievement:** breaking the community's isolation and stigma in the eyes of local authorities

### Grant to the National Coalition for Justice and Truth

**Grant amount:** US\$38,188

**Grant period:** August 2014 to August 2015

**Other support:** use of IKA's office for two part-time staff and for Coalition meetings

**Biggest achievement:** sustaining the consolidation of 50 organizations based in different parts of the archipelago as a national movement grounded in local struggles

Indonesia's national parliament passed a new law in early 2014 establishing a system of participatory and accountable democratic governance at the village level. The national government will allocate significant funds to be managed and accounted for directly by village-level governments. The implementation of this Village Law will provide a new opportunity for all of IKA's partners, including the victims' association in North Sumatera that is advocating for official recognition of Syamsiah's reclaimed land as a self-standing village.

**Kamala Chandrakirana** is chair of the board at Indonesia for Humanity. Email [kchandrakirana2012@gmail.com](mailto:kchandrakirana2012@gmail.com)

## Video

Mencari Desa yang Hilang Di Padang Halaban (In search of the lost village in Padang Halaban) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkXSeg\\_zleM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkXSeg_zleM)

## BRAZIL HUMAN RIGHTS FUND

### Mothers of May: fighting for memory, truth and justice for victims of structural violence



**Ana Valeria Araujo**

In 2006 violence by prison gangs and police retaliation unleashed a wave of killings in the Brazilian state of São Paulo. The victims were often poor young people of African or indigenous descent, a good many of whom died at the hands of the police. Mostly they were not involved in organized crime, and their mothers were unable to find out what had happened to them. In response, Mothers of May was formed, a network of families and relatives of the victims, with the aim of fighting for truth and justice for their children – an aim that evolved to embrace the bigger struggle against police violence and the violence of militias. The Brazil Human Rights Fund decided to support Mothers of May, and what follows is an account of what the group achieved with this support.

#### Key messages

- The importance of advocacy and community organizing: a key role for social justice philanthropy is helping to amplify local voices and supporting organized movement building, recognizing grassroots collective action as a tool for change.
- ‘They know better than we do what needs to be done’: the Brazil Fund’s perspective is to support their grantee’s perception of the problem and how to address it. This perspective is at the core of social justice philanthropy.
- It is crucial to give groups the support they need without imposing your own views on what they should be doing.

### The Crimes of May 2006

Between 12 and 21 May 2006, a wave of violence erupted across the state of São Paulo. The so-called 'Bloody Week' began after the state government moved 765 prisoners to a maximum security prison located 380 miles from the capital. One of the transferred prisoners was Marcola, the leader of the Primeiro Comando da Capital, a São Paulo-based prison gang. Marcola directed the organization's attacks from prison. Attacks were mounted against police stations, police vehicles and other public buildings, and riots erupted in prisons across the state. In the first six days, 59 police officers were killed.

The police responded to the attacks with excessive force, and death squads were also active at this time. In total, 564 people were killed by gunfire in the state of São Paulo during that week (59 police officers and 505 civilians), according to the São Paulo Regional Council of Medicine. Of these, over 400 were youths of African or indigenous descent, who were summarily executed. In the city of São Paulo itself, 163 deaths were registered during Bloody Week, an increase of 52 per cent compared to the same period from 2000 to 2004. On 24 May, when the police response still had not subsided, the authorities admitted that only 79 of the 300 recognized victims were involved in organized crime.



### Mothers of May is established

These Crimes of May 2006, as they became known, gave rise to a group named Mothers of May, organized by a network of mothers, families and friends of the victims. In most cases, victims were killed when leaving their homes, their jobs or their schools; they were not being arrested. Some 'disappeared' and it took a while for their families to find out that they were dead. Mothers of May's aim was to fight for truth, memory and justice for all victims of discriminatory, institutional and police violence.

In 2010, the Brazil Human Rights Fund decided to support a proposal from Mothers of May made in response to its annual call for proposals. The Brazil Fund wanted to help them to take their fight for memory, truth and justice to a different level. As well as organizing activities and meetings, the grant enabled the group to produce a collection of video and written testimonials with the purpose of bringing the relatives closer to each other in the fight for justice. Four years after the crimes, most mothers were still waiting for an official explanation of the killings of their children, and the material would bring pressure to bear on the authorities and help move the process forward.

**“As a funder, our perspective has always been to support our grantee’s perception of the problem: they are the ones facing the problem, so they know better than we do what needs to be done.”**

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### How did the Brazil Human Rights Fund come to support Mothers of May?

The goal of the Brazil Human Rights Fund is to promote respect for human rights in the country and we do this by supporting grassroots and human rights organizations that are fighting against structural violence and discrimination. As a funder, our perspective has always been to support our grantee’s perception of the problem: they are the ones facing the problem, so they know better than we do what needs to be done. Once we decide that a proposal is worth supporting, we support the grantee’s strategies, attempting to provide concrete opportunities for their voices to be heard.

But how did we come to the conclusion that Mothers of May was the right organization to address problems arising from discriminatory institutional and police violence? Would the group’s proposal effectively advance the fight for justice for the families of victims?

Answering those questions required us to examine the group closely and find out what kind of experience they had, as well as evaluating the strategies they were putting forward. We learned that their experience included systematic reporting of cases and of the status of investigations and law suits; participation in debates and meetings; and planning activities such as protests, marches and vigils. Mothers

of May were clearly capable of implementing their proposal. The fact that they maintained close partnerships with groups in other parts of the country where police violence is also a major issue, and their ability to network in order to strengthen their work, showed us that other human rights defenders in the country recognized the group's legitimacy, and this helped to convince us that their proposal was worth supporting.

### The 'resistance followed by death' campaign

A year after that, the Brazil Human Rights Fund made a second grant to Mothers of May to develop the National Network of Mothers, Relatives and Friends of Victims of State Violence, which coordinated a national campaign for the end of the terms 'death while resisting arrest' and 'resistance followed by death' in police reports throughout Brazil. These terms were used as a means of legitimizing judicial murders by police officers, usually of poor people of African descent. Under cover of this pretext, most cases had been dismissed, and the assassins had not faced trial.

By mounting a strong campaign against the indiscriminate use of the term 'resistance followed by death', the Network of Mothers aimed to shine a spotlight on institutional and police violence that discriminates against the poor and those of African descent. A number of NGOs took part in this initiative. Mothers of May was also able to step up its actions, and to organize marches and peaceful protests.

**“There are risks in supporting social movements and grassroots organizations that may not be structured, and struggle to maintain their existence. A good selection mechanism minimizes these risks.”**

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### Risks and challenges

In the field of human rights there is always the risk that the political context may change to such an extent that strategies need to be adjusted, or an initiative may not be viable in the way it was initially planned. When we select a proposal based on the analysis of human rights activists and experts, it is easier to anticipate some of those risks, and to find ways to deal with them, but it is always more difficult to anticipate the risks when the police are involved.

In addition, there are risks in supporting social movements and grassroots organizations that may not be structured, and struggle to maintain their existence. A good selection mechanism minimizes these risks, but the greatest challenge in supporting such groups is how to balance providing the support that they need with giving groups space to develop their activities without intervention, only acting to amplify their voices.



We address this partly by providing technical assistance to grantees alongside the grants in order to help build their institutional capacity. We keep up regular communication with grantees, conduct site visits and hold an annual training workshop. These training workshops put together capacity-building sessions on finance and office management, fundraising and communication. Most of all, they are good networking and peer learning opportunities for grassroots organizations. We think of these efforts as part of the grant, as a way to increase the effectiveness of our funding in pursuit of the grant's aims.

### What has been achieved?

The activities carried out by Mothers of May with our support provided great visibility to the group, which became a focal point for fighting against police violence in general. With nearly 70,000 followers, Mothers of May's Facebook page is currently used as a tool to report institutional violence perpetrated by police forces throughout the country. More specifically, they contributed greatly to exposing the violent state reaction to the attacks carried out by Primeiro Comando da Capital in 2006. Although impunity is still the norm in relation to this episode, a few mothers have been able to get access to the official version on the killings of their children, and are likely to be compensated by the state. In 2011 Mothers of May won the National Human Rights Award, the country's recognition of the relevance of the work carried out.

**“With nearly 70,000 followers, Mothers of May's Facebook page is currently used as a tool to report institutional violence perpetrated by police forces throughout the country.”**

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### Activities supported by Brazil Fund grants

**Mothers of May carried out a great range of activities with the support of the Brazil Human Rights Fund in 2010 and 2011.**

**These include:**

- participation in public activities organized by different movements
- participation in interviews
- launch of a book on the struggle of mothers who lost their children to police violence
- creation of a Facebook page for updated communication
- submission of a series of documents and reports to authorities
- expressing solidarity with other victims of institutional violence





Debora Maria da Silva, one of the founders of Mothers of May, speaks at the São Paulo Union of Journalists in 2011. During the event, which marked five years of impunity for the crimes of May 2006, Mothers of May launched the book *From Mourning to Fight*, published with the support of the Brazil Fund.

Mothers of May also went on to present a Bill to the Brazilian legislature to ban the terms 'death while resisting arrest' and 'resistance followed by death' from police reports in Brazil. They worked on this in conjunction with the Secretariat for Human Rights, the National Council for Human Rights, the Legislative Office of the Ministry of Justice and the Public Defender Office of São Paulo.

On January 2013, those terms were banned from police reports in the state of São Paulo. It was a major victory and a great precedent for the country as a whole. A Bill is currently before Congress to expand it into federal law.

### What next?

Mothers of May operates in an atmosphere of intensifying violence by police officers both on and off duty, who are strongly suspected of being the authors of new massacres carried out on the outskirts of São Paulo in 2015.

Now, the group is developing a project called '10 years after the Crimes of May 2006: remember the date, so it never happens again', which aims to guarantee the right to memory, truth, justice, reparation and peace in the city of São Paulo.

With a small grant for emergency support by the Brazil Human Rights Fund, the movement is celebrating a decade of work with educational activities and documentation. The country's need to take action against institutional violence is one of the greatest slogans of this movement. To Mothers of May, the failure to punish the military

**“For us, if at any point we had any doubt about supporting Mothers of May, their achievements have shown that we made the right decision.”**

dictatorship torturers allows state repression to survive and make new victims.

For us, if at any point we had any doubt about supporting Mothers of May, their achievements have shown that we made the right decision. There is huge potential in supporting grassroots organizations, even informal groups, that are directly connected to human rights violations in the field. We need to empower those groups in order to help change realities in Brazil.

**Ana Valeria Araujo** is executive director of the Brazil Human Rights Fund. Email [avaraujo@fundodireitoshumanos.org.br](mailto:avaraujo@fundodireitoshumanos.org.br)

### Videos

Respeitem as Mães de Maio! (Show respect to the Mothers of May!) Excerpt from an emotional speech by Deborah Maria Silva, founder of Mothers of May, nine years after the massacre, during a protest in São Paulo on 15 May 2015. [www.youtube.be/y56NwaRL1oo](http://www.youtube.be/y56NwaRL1oo)

Missão: Justiça e Paz (Mission: Justice and Peace)

Documentary on Mothers of May from the Crimes of May 2006 through the end of 2010. This is part of the Brazil Fund-supported project ‘Mothers of May in Brazil’s democracy’. [www.youtube.be/Q1Wz6tYoveo](http://www.youtube.be/Q1Wz6tYoveo)

Crimes of May

Documentary produced by journalism students of Paulista University in 2012. It reflects on the acts conducted by the police during the May 2006

### Key facts

**The Brazil Fund has made three separate grants to Mothers of May.**

**Mothers of May in Brazil’s democracy – five years after the crimes in May 2006: truth and justice, yesterday and today!**

**Grant amount:** R\$ 24,940

**Grant period:** 2010–11

**Other support:** participation in Brazil Fund training workshop

**National Campaign for the End of ‘Death while resisting arrest’**

**Grant amount:** R\$ 22,440

**Grant period:** 2012–13

**Other support:** participation in Brazil Fund training workshop and speaking opportunities for

**Mother of May’s Debora Silva Maria**

**Emergency support for:** 10 years after the Crimes of May 2006: remember the date, so it never happens again

**Amount:** R\$ 15,000

**Grant period:** 2015

attacks, the role of the state, and the hundreds of executions. Includes reports by families of victims.

(English subtitles available) [www.youtube.be/-eEboklrFmU](http://www.youtube.be/-eEboklrFmU)

Mães – Efeitos psicológicos da violência policial nas famílias (Mothers - Psychological effects of police violence in the families)

Mothers whose children were killed in the Crimes of May 2006 talking about the impact on their lives. Following this, a therapy group was established.

(English subtitles available) [www.youtube.be/BJfHNadtHPA](http://www.youtube.be/BJfHNadtHPA)

## FORD FOUNDATION, PHILIPPINES

### Synergeia: saving Filipino children from a lifetime of ignorance



**Suzanne Siskel**

**‘Save a Filipino child from a lifetime of ignorance.’ This is a rallying cry of Synergeia in the Philippines, a coalition of individuals and organizations working to improve the quality of basic education so that it works for every young Filipino, particularly the poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable. It builds on a programme supported by the Ford Foundation in the Philippines in the late 1990s to reform a once exemplary education system fallen into decay following years of neglect and corruption. When Ford withdrew from the country in the early 2000s, the education initiatives it had funded took the unusual step of banding together to form Synergeia, a non-profit corporation. Initially funded with an exit grant from Ford, Synergia has gone on to serve communities throughout the Philippines, helping to bring about startling drops in illiteracy and dropout rates.**

#### Key messages

- ‘At base, the problem was governance’: this story highlights a classic tenet of social justice philanthropy – that, to achieve lasting change, it’s necessary to attack the root causes of a problem, in this case corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, weak financial accountability and lack of political will.
- Broad consultation prior to the start of the programme was vital not only in helping to develop the right strategy but also in building legitimacy.
- A well-thought-out exit can ensure the continuation of work beyond the involvement of the funder. In this case, a tie-off grant provided funds for core support, training in crucial areas and establishment of an endowment.

“I was new to the Philippines, I was not an expert in education, and our staff in the Manila office were sceptical about going in a new direction. But the fact that so many of our trusted colleagues and partners had recommended that we consider exploring this field helped me overcome doubts about the wisdom of doing so.”

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### The decline of Filipino education

In the early to mid 1900s the Philippines had one of the best educational systems in Asia. However, over the subsequent six decades, particularly during the years of the Marcos dictatorship and into the post-People Power era, the quality, accessibility and affordability of primary and secondary education declined dramatically. Although its constitution mandates the government to commit a high proportion of its budget to public education, the Philippines had one of the lowest allocations for education among ASEAN countries. It is no wonder that the failing education system was regarded as a significant factor in sustained levels of poverty and vast disparities across socioeconomic and ethnic groups.

By the late 1990s, accepted ratios of students to textbooks could be as high as 20 pupils for every book that was theoretically available. Teachers, whose salaries were already substandard, often waited months to be paid and so had little incentive to come to work regularly. Rural municipalities had buildings designated as elementary, secondary and vocational schools, but all were underused and generally in disrepair. In strife-torn parts of the southern Philippines, no more than 30 per cent of children were finishing elementary school and many were dropping out much earlier. Parents may have sacrificed other needs to cover school fees but the system was not delivering education to their children, a de facto deprivation of a basic right.

At this point the Ford Foundation gave its office in the Philippines the opportunity to expand its programming. As the incoming country representative, I interviewed a broad range of Filipino colleagues from academia, government, civil society, religious communities and business. Almost without exception, they asked that the foundation work to improve the quality of education.

### An unexpected solution

I was new to the Philippines, I was not an expert in education, and our staff in the Manila office were sceptical about going in a new direction. But the fact that so many of our trusted colleagues and partners had recommended that we consider exploring this field helped me overcome doubts about the wisdom of doing so. Over the next year, I met with education specialists, government and private sector leaders, and experts on many different aspects of the educational system. I came to understand that, though fixing the public education



system in the Philippines was a multifaceted challenge, at base the problem was governance. It would not be possible to achieve systemic change without tackling corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, weak financial accountability and lack of political will.



School Governing Council workshop 2015 (North Upi, Barira and Buldon cluster).

This may not have been an obvious course either to the country's education specialists or to the leaders of Ford's education programme at its headquarters. Nevertheless, it seemed to be a promising, albeit somewhat risky, approach, especially as it could build on the foundation's longstanding

initiative to strengthen the transparency and accountability of local governments throughout the Philippines and elsewhere in the world. That work had not focused on a specific sector, nor had there been collaboration or a deliberate link between its governance and education programme officers. Now, however, the foundation could test its ability to help channel the discontent of communities and citizens – the demand side of a change process – towards the supply side of the equation, positive efforts to reform the public delivery of primary and secondary education.

The most important challenge that followed was finding an exceptional person to lead this new area of work in our Manila office. I was given the latitude to hire an unlikely candidate as education programme officer – a prominent Filipina who had served as a senior finance ministry official and was an expert on domestic finance, fighting corruption, and improving government performance at local and provincial levels. Importantly, too, her first job had been teaching third grade in schools serving low-income communities so she was acutely aware of the need to give voice to teachers and their unions, local government officials and parents, none of whom were typically involved in decision-making about education at the local level. This was clearly a gamble because this person had never worked in



philanthropy and had not been involved directly in education reform. Furthermore, she had been a very visible, high-level government official who had considerably more power and influence than a Ford Foundation programme officer. But I trusted her commitment, intelligence and humility, and betting on her proved to be critical to the success of the work we launched.

### **An unconventional approach**

The grantmaking process began with ‘learning circles’ convened throughout the country for people to air their complaints, concerns and suggestions. Through this process the programme officer identified key people and organizations whom she believed could play positive complementary roles in a national initiative entitled ‘Building a Constituency to Make Education Work’. Over the course of less than three years of grantmaking, Ford was supporting 27 local education reform programmes throughout the country. These relied on the interest and participation of mayors, local school boards, teachers’ unions, parent groups and, in some cases, religious leaders in endorsing strategies and concrete benchmarks aimed at improving public schools. In a short period, grantees achieved significant increases in reading and maths test scores, a decrease in the school dropout rate, and strong community involvement in project planning and management.

### **Ford withdraws and Synergeia is formed**

Early in the life of this work, I was asked by the Ford Foundation’s leadership to return to Indonesia to head our office there. I feared that my successor would abandon or undervalue the potential of our education work. Worse still, just as the programme was gaining recognition, Ford decided to close its Philippines office following a decline in the value of the foundation’s endowment. Rather than panic, the programme officer made a bold proposal to bring together our education grantees into a non-profit corporation called Synergeia (from the Greek for a union of forces whose whole is greater than the sum of its parts). It was designed to serve as a venue for coordinating reform programmes in basic education and scaling the successful ones nationally. Its success as a national initiative would depend on its ability to work with two government agencies, the Department of Education and the Department of Interior and Local Governments, along with socio-civic groups, schools, teachers, parents and students.

Believing that people closest to the problem would be most motivated and able to address it, Synergeia focused on the reinvention of local

**“The programme officer made a bold proposal to bring together our education grantees into a non-profit corporation called Synergeia (from the Greek for a union of forces whose whole is greater than the sum of its parts).”**

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school boards. These became a powerful vehicle for meaningful community participation and the first step in demonstrating how devolution of responsibility for basic education to local governments could be successful.

Fortunately the new head of the Manila office was highly supportive of this work and ensured that Ford provided a strong financial footing for continuing the programme as the foundation made its exit from the Philippines. Ford made a one-off grant to Synergeia for nearly US\$2 million, US\$1 million of which established an endowment that would enable the organization to thrive long after its initial funding was exhausted. The grant provided core support for an office and staff to coordinate activities between the 27 reform programmes across the country and to build the organization's capacity to manage and to raise funds. In addition, there were funds for the training of programme teams in areas such as documentation, benchmarking results, resource generation, improving governance, and strengthening community engagement; and for advocacy programmes to stimulate public interest in basic education issues.

**“Although Ford had a history of endowing organizations it believed were strong and needed the capacity and flexibility to sustain their core work, it was unusual and risky to provide an endowment to a brand new organization with no institutional track record.”**

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Although Ford had a history of endowing organizations it believed were strong and needed the capacity and flexibility to sustain their core work, it was unusual and risky to provide an endowment to a brand new organization with no institutional track record. Had the Philippines office continued to exist, it is unlikely that Synergeia would have been given so much funding so quickly. Nonetheless, the Ford Foundation's leadership recognized Synergeia's potential for significant impact on a critical problem in the Philippines and an opportunity to leave an enduring legacy in a country in which it had invested millions of dollars over more than half a century. Importantly, the performance of the education programme's grantees had been strong and effective enough to reassure Ford's decision makers that endowing this work was a bet worth making.

### **A nationwide success story in progress**

In the 15 years since the grant to establish Synergeia was made, the organization has become a catalyst for reform of basic education, setting national standards for ways to improve the performance of school children, teachers and local school boards. In the early days, the programme made canny decisions about which mayors and local governments would be most likely to accept and champion change, becoming mentors for officials in other parts of the country on a range of issues such as improving property tax collection to provide better

public services or introducing school lunch and other programmes aimed at their poorest constituents.



Parents of Lakeview Elementary School students attend a training seminar on Health and Nutrition in September 2015.

The Ford programme officer had also enlisted some of the country's most responsible business leaders, governors and university presidents to create a board that would both guide the organization and lend it legitimacy and prestige. This board, in turn, attracted

corporations and local business support for in-kind provision of school supplies, transportation and other needs in impoverished school districts.

Within only a few years of its founding, Synergeia had attracted funding from international development agencies to implement programmes in areas afflicted by conflict and severe poverty, especially in Mindanao, as well as to expand its work with local school boards, school governance councils and local governments throughout the country. Today it has been instrumental in improving basic education for at least 4 million schoolchildren in more than 500 municipalities in the Philippines. In parts of Mindanao where it is active, for example, illiteracy rates among second graders have been cut from 85 to 15 per cent, and in its sites nationwide, dropout rates have been cut by 45 per cent. Equally important is the demonstration that the basic right to education for all children in the Philippines can be fulfilled when civil society and government identify problems together and collaborate effectively to overcome them.

### Myanmar next?

Synergeia continues to develop and advance its model throughout the Philippines. It has added adult literacy programmes and financial and educational enhancement initiatives to help poor students continue to

high school and college. In addition it is providing a compelling menu of opportunities for individuals and businesses all over the country to contribute their time and resources

to support students, teachers and schools in the neediest parts of the country. Its next step is envisioning how its model of 'building the capacity of the community to provide a better education for its children' may be adapted in other countries in Asia. Appropriately, Synergeia has set its sights on Myanmar, another ASEAN country with a faltering education system that was once considered a model for the rest of Asia.

#### Key facts

**Grant amount:** US\$1 million for an endowment fund for Synergeia and another US\$1 million for 5 years of operations

**Grant period:** 5 years

**Suzanne Siskel** was Ford Foundation representative in the Philippines from 1997 to 2000. She is currently executive vice president and chief operating officer of The Asia Foundation. Email [suzanne.siskel@asiafoundation.org](mailto:suzanne.siskel@asiafoundation.org)

#### For more information

[www.synergeia.org.ph](http://www.synergeia.org.ph)

[www.facebook.com/SynergeiaFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/SynergeiaFoundation)

## PATRICK F TAYLOR FOUNDATION, USA

‘You can go to college: it’s not just a promise, it’s the law’



**Andrew Milner**

In 1989, the US state of Louisiana passed a law that every child who achieves certain standards should be allowed to go to college regardless of their parents’ ability to pay. This was the culmination of four years of campaigning by businessman and philanthropist Patrick Taylor and the foundation he set up. Taylor’s initial aim was to enable young people from poor New Orleans families to go to college; this was later extended to all Louisiana students regardless of ability to pay. Eight years later what had been known as the Taylor Plan was subsumed under the Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS). This is the story of far-reaching structural changes that stemmed from the initiative of one visionary philanthropist.

### Key messages

- Philanthropy for social change is not the preserve of the liberal-minded. The original funder in this case was a staunch conservative.
- It was the fund that undertook the advocacy, so in this case the funder was not neutral but took a stand directly.
- From the original initiative has grown not only legislation but a change in public attitudes – to such an extent that attempting to abandon or cut the programme would be seen as politically unwise.

### The sorry state of Louisiana education

In the mid-1980s, Louisiana had very weak academic standards. Half of its college students were required to take remedial courses; high schools were not adequately preparing students to go to college; and the colleges themselves had very low admission requirements. Graduation rates were around 20 per cent.

Partly a cause and partly an effect of this was a kind of 'brain drain'. Louisiana was losing around 20 per cent of its best students because they went out of state to study. Finally – and this was the seed of the TOPS programme – students from low-income families were prevented from going to college because of the cost of tuition. This also meant that often students from minorities were not going to college.

“He once asked a classroom of children in a poor New Orleans neighbourhood how many of them were planning to go to college. ‘One hand went up,’ relates Jim Caillier. ‘So he asked how many would go to college if they had the money – every hand went up.’”

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### Enter Patrick Taylor ...

‘Pat Taylor was an oil and gas man,’ says Jim Caillier of the Patrick F Taylor Foundation. A committed conservative, he set up the Taylor Energy Company in 1979. ‘He had no children but he wanted to help young people to be able to go to college. So he said he would pay for tuition for those students who stayed in high school and did well.’

This will have resonated with his own experience. As a penniless young man from Texas, he had been given the opportunity to study free at the University of Louisiana and understood the importance of a free education to children from poor families. There’s a story that he once asked a classroom of children in a poor New Orleans neighbourhood how many of them were planning to go to college. ‘One hand went up,’ relates Jim Caillier. ‘So he asked how many would go to college if they had the money – every hand went up. Those kids were being realistic. He realized it was the means that were wanting, not the desire.’

### ‘Taylor’s Kids’

So in 1985 Taylor and his wife Phyllis set up the Patrick F Taylor Foundation. They promised to send 183 children from poor backgrounds, popularly called ‘Taylor’s Kids’, to college, regardless of their parents’ ability to pay, provided they studied diligently, maintained a certain academic standard and stayed out of trouble.

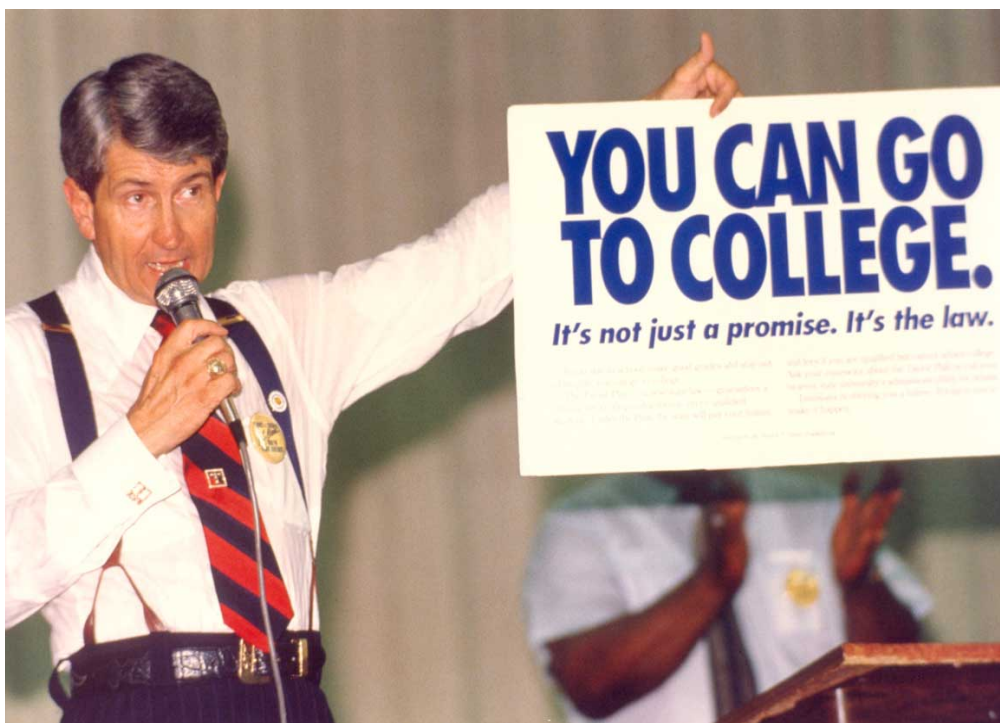
Taylor’s initiative was primarily confined to children from New Orleans, because he couldn’t afford to fund statewide. Taylor realized that if the idea of a college education based on merit rather than



wealth was to be extended into a general principle, rather than confined to a lucky handful, the state would have to fund it.

### A successful battle with the legislature

The battle with the legislature was the stiffest challenge in the development of what became the TOPS programme. It was ‘a bitter fight’, says Jim Caillier. ‘Louisiana being a very conservative state said that kids should pay their own way through college, and should not be the state’s responsibility. A merit-based programme was not something it wanted to get into.’ Taylor hired lobbyists and ‘pounded on legislators’ doors, talking to them and convincing them one on one that this was the right thing to do. Louisiana had a very low graduation rate and was one of the lowest performing states. Something had to be done if we were to see economic gains in the state and move education standards from the bottom to somewhere in the middle. Those types of arguments were the biggest thing.’



In 1989, the state of Louisiana ruled that every child who performs at a certain level should be allowed to go to college regardless of their parents' ability to pay. What became known as the Taylor Plan became state law by a very narrow vote under the name of the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). In 1997, it was subsumed under the Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS). At this point it became a state-

sponsored, merit-based programme for all students who met the programme requirements, not just those from poor families.

In a sense, the battle with the legislature has to be won every year, remarks Jim Caillier. Funding for the programme comes out of the state's general budget and costs have risen steadily from \$15 million in 1989 to \$280 million – largely because of rises in the cost of tuition.

There is still a lobby in the legislature that would prefer the money to go elsewhere. However, TOPS has become a very popular programme, among students and their parents. In a recent opinion poll, it gained an 82 per cent approval rating. Some of those in the legislature and their children went to college on TOPS and the state's gubernatorial candidates routinely commit themselves to support for it. 'I don't think they'd get elected if they didn't say they'd continue TOPS,' says Caillier. In short, it has become institutionalized.

### What has TOPS achieved?

Louisiana's college graduation rate has risen from around 20 per cent to 44 per cent. Seventy per cent of students who are TOPS-eligible – those who followed the prescribed high school curriculum, get the requisite grades and don't acquire a criminal record – now graduate, compared with 30 per cent of those who are not TOPS-eligible. And the state's colleges no longer offer remedial courses.

The brain drain has also slowed to a trickle. When the award first started, says Sujuan Boutte of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA), the lowest acceptance was among students in the higher income bracket (\$150,000 and above). 'That indicates that those folks were sending their kids out of state,' she says. Now 90 per

cent of all eligible students choose to stay in Louisiana for their tertiary education.

There has been change in other respects, too. Between 2002-03 and 2013-14, there was a 50 per cent growth in the number of African-Americans receiving a TOPS award, a 51 per cent growth among Asian students, and increases of 138 per cent among American Indians and 219 per cent among Hispanic students. So standards have risen and access has increased.

[Patrick Taylor outlines the TOPS idea to high school students.](#)



However, Jim Caillier believes that the most significant effect has been on the state's high schools, not on its universities 'because that is where the kids meet the standards'. To qualify for TOPS funding, students have to follow a set curriculum in high schools that prepares them for college and 76 per cent of high school students do. 'So even if the kids don't go to college, they're better educated and better prepared for life.' Parents, too, are more involved in high school education, 'making sure their kids are taking the right courses, making sure they are meeting certain grade point averages (GPAs) and that they are prepared for the American College Test to get the right score to qualify for TOPS.'

Another important feature is that, as Caillier puts it, 'money goes to kids to challenge the kids. If we had taken the \$287 million and given it to the 14 universities, it would have been absorbed into their budgets and we probably would have seen no difference in terms of graduation rates; there wouldn't have been the incentive for kids to work harder in high school.' It has changed the culture of high schools, he feels.

### Social as well as academic benefits

He notes powerful social effects, too. 'The kids take pride in the fact that they earn their tuition in high school. And since removing the income criterion, even the better-off kids have changed their attitude – they are heading towards common standards and taking the same curriculum, and they have the same sense of pride and comradeship.'

Even those that don't meet the requirements are better off, he argues. 'They have worked hard to earn something; they are vested in their education and they want something more meaningful in life.'

Following adoption of the Taylor Plan in Louisiana, the Taylor Foundation began campaigning for similar programmes in states

**"Since removing the income criterion, even the better-off kids have changed their attitude – they are heading towards common standards and taking the same curriculum, and they have the same sense of pride and comradeship."**

### What TOPS students say about the programme

'I had absolutely no idea I'd end up here – TOPS played a huge role. I might have found other scholarships, but most are hard to get or not accessible. I'd never have been able to study abroad and learn languages.'

Aaron Forbes, University of New Orleans '06  
#TOPSgrad

'TOPS gave me the opportunity to attend college in a state that I have loved and called home since birth. It gives all students from our state the opportunity to deepen our roots in a place we call home that needs our help and our skills now more than ever.'

Adam, Tulane University '14#thankyouTOPS

across the country. There are now initiatives in 20 states. In 2008, four years after Patrick Taylor's death, the Louisiana legislature renamed TOPS the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students in his honour.

### What remains to be done?

Four years – the customary time it takes to earn a bachelor's degree – is a long time on the budget of a low-income family. This is something the Patrick F Taylor Foundation is working on in conjunction with the state's department of education. 'What we are trying to do now,' says Jim Caillier, 'is to shorten the time ... we are looking at early admission programmes and dual enrolment so kids can earn credits in high school so they need less than four years to graduate, which cuts costs for the state and students and parents.'

TOPS pays the students' tuition fees, but there is still the problem of maintenance. For needy students, there is the federal Pell Grant and the Louisiana Go Grant, and Louisiana State University has developed its own programme called Pelican Promise for needy students. However, Sujuan Boutte believes still more needs to be done to guarantee what she calls 'equity of access', so her office is working intensively with the public schools in the state with the lowest percentage of students qualifying for TOPS. A high proportion of those students, she says, are 'low-income students and first generation students'. She has developed a match system which looks at what students do best, at how they can get paid legally to do it, then finds what qualification they need to do that and which institution offers 'the degree, certificate or whatever credential you need with the least amount of loan debt'. LOSFA also goes out to those schools 'for a whole year holding those kids' hands ... to explain what college is to students'. This hand-holding takes many forms: 'We help them to apply, we help them to pay their application fees – they often don't have the money for that. We help them to get their federal student ID which allows them to apply for federal student aid, TOPS and the Go Grant. Once students have got acceptance letters, we help them interpret the Student Aid Report (SAR) or offer letters from colleges.'

LOSFA also pays attention to combating what she terms 'summer melt'. 'Research shows that up to 40 per cent of students from low-income families who are accepted for college don't show up in the fall. Why? Orientation fees, housing fees – the students don't have that money ... When a student gets the letter to come to orientation, meet their instructors, schedule their classes, it costs to go. In one particular student's case the cost was \$50. The student's family could

**"Four years – the customary time it takes to earn a bachelor's degree – is a long time on the budget of a low-income family. This is something the Patrick F Taylor Foundation is working on in conjunction with the state's department of education."**

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not afford that \$50 so the student did not attend. If there are waivers, we will identify them for the kids. If we have money available, we will help pay the fees for those who can't.'

### **From philanthropic initiative to accepted principle**

What started off as an act of private generosity has been enshrined as a right. The TOPS programme has opened up the possibility of higher education to students who could not have dreamed of it before, it has raised the quality of the state's education and it has created a sense of identity and common endeavour among students from all backgrounds. Most important of all, it has offered them the possibility of beginning their adult lives on an even footing. Even the 40 per cent of TOPS-eligible students who decide not to go to college but to pursue some other option benefit from it, believes Jim Caillier: 'Our goal is still to improve the quality of our high schools and the quality of our universities and to have people better prepared for life, regardless of what they choose to do.'

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### **For more information**

[www.pftaylorfoundation.org](http://www.pftaylorfoundation.org)



## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

### When the wall turned bright pink



**Avila Kilmurray**

It is not every day that the iconic 'Free Derry Corner' turns bright pink. But this is what happened as a result of a small grant of £3,000 awarded by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) to the Rainbow Project, which works in Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland's second city. This is the story of the difference a small grant can make, and it is also a tale of how an 'added value' programme of work can augment the impact of the money awarded. The work of a group of LGBT activists has not only helped spark a change in the public perception of LGBT people in Northern Ireland; it has helped improve relations between the police and the gay community to the extent that homophobic crimes have decreased massively in Derry, and laid down a pattern for bringing the LGBT community and the majority community together throughout Northern Ireland.

#### Key messages

- CFNI used its convening power to bring together diverse groups – local neighbourhood communities, immigrant groups, those holding 'conflicting political and social views' – and to raise the issue of homophobia throughout Northern Ireland.
- Working with an organization, rather than just giving it money, can help it to grow and develop. Working with CFNI, the Rainbow Project started to look at its own power dynamics and came to realize that it was only serving some sections of the gay community.
- The CFNI Bill of Rights programme created an inclusive rights narrative rather than groups focusing solely on 'our' rights.

**“If Northern Ireland was shifting politically in the 1990s, social attitudes showed little sign of change. The Rainbow activists faced discrimination, prejudice and abuse. It was only in 1982 that homosexuality was decriminalized in Northern Ireland.”**

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### **The problem: homophobia in Northern Ireland**

The Rainbow Project was established in Derry in 1994, the year of the historic paramilitary ceasefires, to promote the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) men and women. The first Foyle Pride Festival had been celebrated just a year earlier, in 1993.

If Northern Ireland was shifting politically in the 1990s, social attitudes showed little sign of change. The Rainbow activists faced discrimination, prejudice and abuse. It was only in 1982 that homosexuality was decriminalized in Northern Ireland, and even within the board of CFNI itself there was at least one member who had to be reassured that earlier funding provided to gay and lesbian groups was primarily for ‘health issues’.

If attitudes had changed within the community foundation by the time the CFNI grant was awarded in 2006, the ‘Maiden City’ had become a byword for hate attacks on gays and lesbians. In 2004-05, 72 homophobic incidents were reported to the police, with many others going unreported due to fear and perceived lack of response from the police. The Foyle Pride Festival had to be cancelled after organizers and potential participants were singled out for abuse and attack. One young man described a year-long spate of homophobic attacks, during which his ground-floor flat was paint-bombed, his windows smashed and his curtains set ablaze by a firework thrown through his letter box. Groups of young people regularly congregated outside his home to throw stones at his window and scream abuse. Faced with a research study that highlighted the fact that young gay men were 30 times more likely to commit suicide in Northern Ireland than their heterosexual counterparts, invisibility was no longer an option.

### **A grant to the Rainbow Project to influence the human rights debate**

The Rainbow Project received a grant from the CFNI Bill of Rights Fund. The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement of 1998 had promised a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. We established the Bill of Rights Fund with the help of Atlantic Philanthropies to encourage local groups and communities who had direct experience of marginalization, exclusion and alienation to play a key part in framing this.

The fund had two strands: a small grants programme (up to £10,000) to enable groups to carry out their own initiatives around the Bill of Rights; and a training and support programme which provided a mentor to work with groups as they engaged in self-reflection and developed action plans to look at local issues from a rights perspective. This was a different approach to grantmaking for CFNI. It required a developmental approach which used the funding available to build a relationship that then offered the opportunity for informed, and often challenging, discussion of what a rights-based approach to community issues might entail; and how the rights of one community related to the rights of others. CFNI staff and mentors worked with a range of groups that held conflicting political and social views. This was challenging for us as some of these views were at the very fringes of the stated ethos of the community foundation itself.

### Using the grant to 'out' the issue

The Rainbow Project used its programme grant to re-establish the Foyle Pride Festival in 2007. What caught the local media headlines was the fact that they successfully negotiated to paint the iconic 'Free



Derry Wall', in the local Bogside community, bright pink to celebrate the occasion. The BBC reported 'Free Derry is pink with pride', and quoted Rainbow Project activist David McCartney's description of the gesture as 'a powerful gift'. 'The focus of this year's pride festival is human rights and civil liberties,' he said, 'and the wall is the perfect representation of that.'

The origins of the solitary standing gable wall which proclaims 'You are now entering Free Derry' goes back to 1969-70 when the area held off police and security forces during the Civil Rights protests of the time. Since then it has been largely identified with republicanism and the years of the Troubles.

The painting of the wall was more than just a gesture, it sent out a powerful message that the LGBT community was an important part of

local society. This was a critical message in an area where the local Free Presbyterian Minister had told the local newspaper, ‘we are implacably opposed to the rights being afforded to sodomites.’

### Adding value to grantmaking

The very varied initiatives funded under the training and mentor support strand of the CFNI Bill of Rights programme created a rights narrative of inclusion rather than groups focusing solely on ‘our’ rights. Mentors worked with a number of groups and were all trained by the leading Northern Ireland human rights NGO, the Committee for the Administration of Justice ([www.caj.org.uk](http://www.caj.org.uk)) to ensure they had a shared understanding of the issues. As it happened, the mentor selected by the Rainbow Project was also working with two local community initiatives, which allowed collective meetings to be organized between local neighbourhood communities and members of the Rainbow Project, smoothing the path for negotiations for access to the ‘Free Derry’ wall.

The peer exchange element of the programme allowed the Rainbow Project to build relationships with programme projects from a variety of backgrounds. These included groups representing political ex-prisoners (Republicans and Loyalists); people with disabilities and special needs; minority ethnic communities and largely single-identity Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist neighbourhoods. Stereotypes were challenged and prejudice confronted. The case was made for an inclusive approach to the proposed Northern Ireland Bill of Rights that specifically addressed the rights of the LGBT community.

Finally, internal reflection encouraged by the CFNI mentor led the Rainbow activists to see that power imbalances can be horizontal as well as vertical in nature. They accepted that their management structures and staffing were predominantly male, and they resolved to proactively reach out to the lesbian community.

### Broader impact of the Rainbow grant

Alongside the difficult circumstances facing young lesbian and gay women and men from the Protestant community, the Rainbow Project also identified two other major issues. First, consultation with the LGBT immigrant community revealed that many immigrants (particularly those from Poland) felt unable to access support from groups like Rainbow because of a cultural stigma among their own community. Rainbow’s response was to organize a one-day conference on these broader homophobia issues, with invited

“The very varied initiatives funded under the training and mentor support strand of the CFNI Bill of Rights programme created a rights narrative of inclusion rather than groups focusing solely on ‘our’ rights.”

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speakers from China, France and Poland, and outreach sessions to local immigrant groups.



Foyle Pride Festival,  
August 2015.

Second, homophobic hate crime ‘wasn’t receiving enough attention’ from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, as the chief inspector for the region later acknowledged. ‘We had shied away from gay incidents for too long ... Our main challenge was to build confidence in the gay community.’ As a first step, it was agreed that victims of homophobic hate crimes could report attacks through intermediaries. After negotiation a Foyle Protocol was drawn up in partnership with the Rainbow Project and other local community groups. ‘The result,’ said the chief inspector, ‘is that we’ve seen a massive reduction of incidents and people know that if they assault a gay person, the chances are they’ll be convicted. In the past, they might have got away with it.’

The work with immigrant communities and the Police Service of Northern Ireland was replicated in other regions of Northern Ireland. The Foyle Protocol Partnership was extended to rural areas, a particularly important development.



These initiatives would probably have taken place without the CFNI grant, given the energy and commitment of the Rainbow Project, but the funding and support fast forwarded the process of trust building evidenced by the agreement to paint the 'Free Derry Wall' pink. Our grant also emphasized the shared identity between the Rainbow Project activists and those involved in the other initiatives supported by the Bill of Rights Fund, and a later Social Justice Fund.

#### Key facts

**Grant amount:** £3,000

**Grant period:** one year

**Other support:** a mentor funded by CFNI and selected by the Rainbow Project

**Biggest achievement:** making the issue visible with the support of a wider coalition of community interests drawn together by the convening role of CFNI

#### What next?

At the conference which launched the Foyle Pride Festival, Margaret Ritchie, Minister for Social Development, roundly declared that 'Discrimination or harassment on the grounds of a person's sexual orientation is simply wrong: it is unacceptable and must not be tolerated.' In contrast, Democratic Unionist Party MLA (Stormont Assembly representative) William Hay opposed the use of the city's Guildhall for civil partnership ceremonies and Free Presbyterian Church members picketed the Pride events. There is still work to be done, particularly with young people from the Waterside – the largely Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist neighbourhoods of the city.

The Rainbow Project continues to work on issues like homophobia in schools, which is still having a major impact on the lives of young LGBT people – 44 per cent report being bullied and 29 per cent have attempted suicide. CFNI continues to support local initiatives with a rights focus through its Social Justice Fund and has developed a 'Power Analysis' toolkit to accompany its grantmaking in this field. Homophobia has not gone away in Northern Ireland but gains have been made and the issue is no longer silenced. When the annual Foyle Pride Festival takes place in Derry/Londonderry these days, even the city council Guildhall clock is blushed with a pink light in recognition of the local LGBT community.

**Avila Kilmurray** was executive director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland from 1994 to 2014. She is currently an independent consultant with the Social Change Initiative. Email [a.kilmurray@thesocialchangeinitiative.org](mailto:a.kilmurray@thesocialchangeinitiative.org)

## BERNARD VAN LEER FOUNDATION, NETHERLANDS

### Reducing violence in children's lives



**Lisa Jordan**

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is known for its work in the area of early childhood education over 60 years in more than 40 countries. In 2009, the foundation took a new direction, using that experience to try to convince government and business to invest in young children. One area they focused on was reducing violence in young children's lives. Using a three-pronged approach – shifting social norms, spreading evidence-based policies to prevent violence, and increasing provision of preventive and responsive services – Van Leer has succeeded in bringing the issue of violence into the public domain. The impact has been visible in Peru, India, Uganda and the Netherlands, among other countries.

#### Key messages

- Violence against children is not inevitable and can be prevented.
- This initiative stems from a funder's willingness to look critically at how it worked in pursuit of its mission and as a result to move from being a service-driven funder to becoming a champion of children's rights.
- This shift was based on wide-ranging empirical research by the funder, which brought to light an issue that had remained largely hidden.
- The campaign to raise the issue of violence to children brought in many and diverse voices – fathers, recording artists, church leaders, politicians, traditional healers, police, social workers and, most important of all, children themselves.

“Repeated exposure to violence, either as victims or as witnesses, has lifelong effects on young children’s health, well-being and ability to learn.”

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### Violence against children condoned the world over

‘My father hit me. So what’s the big deal?’ This attitude to violence is commonplace all over the world. Repeated exposure to violence, either as victims or as witnesses, has lifelong effects on young children’s health, well-being and ability to learn. Violence, including neglect, affects the neural pathways and the growth of the brain itself in young children, with permanent consequences. While some forms of extraordinary violence are just that, extraordinary, the Bernard van Leer Foundation found through baseline studies and research across seven countries that the most common drivers of violence include a combination of stress on families and social norms in which certain forms of violence are considered acceptable.

### Why did Van Leer take on this issue?

The Bernard van Leer Foundation has a solid reputation in the area of early childhood education. It is known for financing early education models, publishing articles on the same, and financing research on early childhood development. It has been a stalwart figure in this field for over 60 years, operating at times in more than 40 countries.



Child in Juarez, Mexico.

Photo by Jon Spaul

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In 2009, the board and staff undertook a deep review to assess the relationship between activities and mission. This was partly triggered by the financial crisis, which hit the investment portfolio quite heavily, and also by independent reports commissioned by the foundation that suggested it had lost a bit of its edge. The review helped us understand that given our

positive reputation we could go far beyond the provision of early education to individual children. We could create opportunities to solidify the rights of young children within society.

At this point the Bernard van Leer Foundation essentially completed a journey of moving from being a charitable organization to becoming an organization purposefully oriented towards social change. Van Leer had for 60 years funded early education, which was just

beginning to take hold in the political imagination of many leaders. We would not abandon this work, but we shifted our focus to using our years of experience in 40 countries around the world to try to convince governments and the private sector to invest in young children.

Philanthropic dollars are never stable within society. Stock markets and the whims of the wealthy can move money towards other causes. If children are to get what they need, the resources really need to come from society itself, through structured investments. Van Leer had enough experience to demonstrate successful modelling, so we needed to add advocacy and a rights-based approach to our toolkit if we were to successfully exit from many countries in which we had been engaged for years. Critically, we also needed to understand what, apart from early education, was keeping young children from developing to their full potential but not well addressed in society.

### What is the solution?

Further investigations helped us conclude that of all the factors that determine a child's potential to learn and grow up healthy there was one that was not effectively addressed through the markets, by governments or by foundations – violence.



Drawing by a child from Favela Santa Maria, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It was part of a study that showed that children still had intense memories of the public violence they had witnessed. Photo by CECIP.

To have any significant impact in terms of reducing violence against children, the foundation would need to work in three different areas, and measure reductions in both household and community violence:

- Shifting social norms towards less acceptance of violence
- Spreading evidence-based policies to prevent violence
- Increasing provision of preventive and responsive services

Violence is often considered impossible to prevent, not least because it most often happens to young children in the context of the family.

Family relationships are outside the reach of markets (what product would we sell to stop violence?) and an area that states rarely enter on behalf of children. Cultural norms all over the world condone violence, including those that reinforce parental rights to control children's behaviour.

#### What did BvLF do to address the issue?

Van Leer thought to address the issue first and foremost as a global problem, not one that exists only in developing countries. Violence is rampant across the Americas, North and South. The foundation has a global presence – in Israel, the Netherlands, Brazil and elsewhere – and we wanted to raise awareness of the global scope of this problem. The first grant we made was to the UN's Special Rapporteur on Violence, who reinforced that this was indeed a global problem.

As a result of its own investigations, the foundation realized that the science behind reducing violence in children's lives was lacking in important areas. Those studies that do exist do not begin to cover the physiology or the psychological impact of violence at an early age; or the economic costs to society of ignoring the problem; or the rapid benefits that can accrue to societies that address the issue well. Furthermore, a lot more needed to be done to build the evidence base about what works in terms of interventions to actually prevent violence. The US and the UK had research; very little existed for developing countries or, surprisingly, for Europe. Funding the science and the evidence base and establishing the global nature of the problem were important early investments.

Given Van Leer's size and the size of the problem, we chose to work in coalition with others. At this early stage, we invested heavily in coalition building among other private foundations. Through the Network of European Foundations (NEF) we created the Children and Violence Evaluation Challenge Fund, a pooled fund to support

**“As a result of its own investigations, the foundation realized that the science behind reducing violence in children's lives was lacking in important areas. A lot more needed to be done to build the evidence base about what works.”**

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evidence building in the field. Through this fund Van Leer, together with UBS Optimus, Oak and a fourth anonymous donor, funded 17 evaluations of active programmes across low- and middle-income countries. Separately from the NEF fund, Van Leer and others funded studies in Europe.

### Bringing the issue of violence into the public domain

Van Leer supported 11 separate campaigns to bring this hidden topic out into the public domain and shift social norms. We both funded these campaigns (but only after funding market research) and became a champion ourselves. We used our own publications to reach early childhood advocates and share research findings; funded full pullouts in newspapers and national TV programmes in the Netherlands; and put our own staff on podiums in the Netherlands and across the world, championing the need to address the issue.

Finding ways to address the issue was not always easy, given the private nature of families, the failure of governments to intervene to prevent violence, and the silence of the market. In the Netherlands Van Leer held breakfast briefings for interested members of the Second Chamber to help them understand the prevalence and impact of the problem and potential solutions just before national TV programmes on the topic aimed at children (and fully funded by Van Leer) were aired. Our reputation was on the line.

The campaigns reached close to 3 million people and involved a wide range of messengers such as fathers, recording artists, church leaders, politicians, traditional healers, police and social workers.

Most powerfully, in the Netherlands, Peru and India and in the global debates, children themselves spoke on the need to reduce violence. Having a diverse group of messengers has proved important to effectively mobilize powerful groups in society but this pales in comparison to the long-term effect of children mobilizing for their own rights. Mayors in particular, often in cities plagued by violence, have been inspired to act when confronted by a group of organized children. Having children express the need to stop violence has solidified their rights while also ensuring that from an early age they understand and can act to shape society. This is the 'citizen effect'. In both Peru and India the impact of children mobilizing has been palpable, culminating in a law against corporal punishment in Peru and physical infrastructure changes in slums in India that make them safer for children.

**“Having a diverse group of messengers has proved important to effectively mobilize powerful groups in society but this pales in comparison to the long-term effect of children mobilizing for their own rights.”**

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Children in Lima,  
Peru campaigning  
for a law  
outlawing  
corporal  
punishment.  
Photo by INFANT

**“It is not enough to preach better behaviour. Understanding why negative behaviour takes place and addressing the underlying conditions that spark violence or neglect can change the trajectory of a child’s life.”**

However, campaigns are only one vehicle to create change. If you are aiming for systemic change, campaigning must be combined with other approaches such as direct engagement with policymakers or addressing basic social needs. For example, Van Leer’s partner Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) successfully convinced the European Union to put these children on the official list of vulnerable children, giving them access to more services and support. A coalition of Turkish research partners launched the results of a national survey on family violence, helping to open up a productive dialogue with the Ministry of Family and Social Policies.

We took evaluation seriously. For example, an evaluation of the Dutch television series for children on child abuse (Het Klokhuis), mentioned above, found positive effects on the reporting of violence by children, prompting a strong endorsement from the Mayor of Amsterdam. It seems that bringing the issue out into the open encouraged children to use the hotline, to seek support, and to talk with peers and other adults about the problem.

Monitoring and evaluating other interventions helped the foundation understand that combining behaviour change strategies with activities to help meet families’ basic needs is a promising formula for success. In other words, it is not enough to preach better behaviour. Understanding why negative behaviour takes place and addressing the underlying conditions that spark violence or neglect can change the trajectory of a child’s life. We saw that the number of hours of sleep women get can sometimes correlates with the level of violence

in the household; that organized neighbourhood watches can protect children; that lighting matters in neighbourhoods; and that lunchtime, when children are sent home, is in some countries the most dangerous hour of the day for children. A school lunch programme can reduce violence as well as having a nutritional impact.

### What has been achieved?

Shifting the focus to prevention of violence against children – rather than after-the-fact protection – is probably the biggest impact of Van Leer’s work. Can we see systemic change as a result of this work? The impact is visible both in individual lives and in society. As noted above, new national laws in Peru, championed by children, have outlawed corporal punishment. Unexpectedly, home improvement projects in Peru have resulted in reducing household levels of violence there. Slums in India have social services like police patrols and garbage pickup thanks to children organizing in the face of tragic violence. Household behaviour has changed in Uganda thanks to health workers including positive parenting. In the Netherlands, we were able to influence the political and public agenda, breaking a culture of not talking about violence and thereby making it possible to effectively address violence against children. In addition, the Netherlands’ first children’s ombudsman, Marc Dullaert, made this issue a hallmark of his work, while municipalities have improved their response mechanism for children in danger. Globally, the World Health Organization and other national health institutes continue to amass evidence on the effects of violence in early childhood. UNICEF has launched Six Strategies for Action to prevent violence in children’s lives. Attention to the issue has increased and responses from the household level upwards have improved. The most important message is that violence is not inevitable and it can be prevented.

“The most important message is that violence is not inevitable and it can be prevented.”

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**Lisa Jordan** was executive director of the Bernard van Leer Foundation from 2009 to 2014. Currently she is senior director of strategy and learning at the Porticus Foundation. Email [l.jordan@porticus.com](mailto:l.jordan@porticus.com)

### Videos

Trailer of the Dutch children’s TV show Het Klokhuis (episodes on child abuse; in Dutch):

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=PD96XYQvMI4&list=PL4SpbM0FrMP33w60BROZXcQyiXeLuwnBU&index=8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PD96XYQvMI4&list=PL4SpbM0FrMP33w60BROZXcQyiXeLuwnBU&index=8)

Video showing the effects of violence on children’s development:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5O78Q2xPIY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5O78Q2xPIY)

## FORD FOUNDATION, USA

### Challenging the globalization agenda



**Manuel Montes**

In the 1980s and 1990s, the pressure on developing countries to embrace economic liberalization were overwhelming. They were bullied by the global aid and trade organizations, such as the World Bank, into adopting reforms whose benefits were questionable and many argue hurt the poorest. Their governments and citizens' organizations frequently lacked the means to argue against them, however. Through its International Economic Policy portfolio, the Ford Foundation supported civil society organizations and academia to devise counter-arguments which the world's economists could recognize as a credible challenge and which have ultimately led to changes in many of those damaging policies.

#### Key messages

- As a large funder, the Ford Foundation was able to help groups disrupt the march towards the 'liberalization' of economies that harmed the poorest, through the creation of an alternative narrative.
- The funder prepared the ground very thoroughly and took all views into account when designing the new initiative.
- Ford brought together two very different groups, whose strengths complemented each other. Academia and civil society were both crucial to the success of this initiative.

### The problem: how can we question what we don't understand?

The received wisdom behind the push for globalization in the 1980s and 1990s was that countries that integrated faster with the international economy through policies of deregulation, privatization and tax reduction would perform better economically, reduce poverty, and be able to address some longstanding issues like endemic corruption. The poor in developing countries were among the key intended beneficiaries. However, they were not consulted when programmes of reform were drawn up. Even if they had been, the technical nature of the reforms meant that they did not have the capacity to engage with them. What was needed was analysts and activists who could understand and challenge these policies.

### Bringing together civil society and academic research

Thinking critical of the ideas behind the so-called economic liberalization programmes was emerging in the economics departments of universities, particularly in the US. It was important to support two separate but essential efforts. First, the foundation would fund this critical research and bring together those doing it. Second, we would also support civil society organizations to facilitate joint work and present it to government agencies and international organizations.

**“How did the International Economic Policy portfolio fit in with Ford’s overall direction and focus? According to Bradford Smith, the new portfolio was a logical development of the foundation’s earlier work in economics – though this didn’t mean it was risk-free or easy.”**

Civil society and academia have very different perspectives. Civil society organizations start with a political orientation which comes down to a set of preferred public policies. They are more likely to engage with governments and seek to change their policies, and more capable of doing so. They understand how to organize for needed change. They also lead in terms of identifying potential pitfalls and advantages in policy proposals. Academics by contrast often cannot analyse these pitfalls immediately because data is lacking. However, when they do, they are able to define the pitfalls more precisely and to identify policy solutions based on historical experience and technical analysis. Both perspectives are crucial if the economic liberalization agenda is to be understood and challenged.

### A fit for the Ford Foundation?

How did the International Economic Policy portfolio fit in with Ford’s overall direction and focus? According to Bradford Smith, who was vice president of Ford’s global Peace and Social Justice programme when the portfolio was launched, the new portfolio was a logical development of the foundation’s earlier work in economics – though this didn’t mean it was risk-free or easy.



**“It was risky territory. For a \$13 billion institution like the Ford Foundation, questioning the economic underpinnings on which its own wealth had been built is always a risky thing.”**

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Ford had had an academic international economics programme for decades, Smith points out. The idea of training a generation of economists in transition economies was very much part of Ford’s approach to development. In 1991 the focus was on pairing academic centres of excellence in the global South with those in industrialized countries, with the aim of strengthening southern capacity to do policy-orientated research and analysis. Following the dot.com collapse in the late 1990s, ‘one of the first modern shocks to the economy’, more questions were being asked about the Washington Consensus and whether there couldn’t be a better economic paradigm.

Having spent a lot of time developing academic capacity in the global South, says Smith, ‘it made sense to take it further and try to gain an equal seat for southern intellectuals and academic centres at the table where large-scale economic programmes were being designed.’ At the same time Ford wanted to increase the diversity of its own staff, in its New York City headquarters as well as the field offices. ‘We wanted to recruit a strong academic economist from the global South to lead the global economics programme, and so Butch was recruited – the first person not from the US or UK to lead the programme.’

‘The way you look at globalization depends on where in the world you sit. The experience of an academic who had come of age intellectually in a developing country, in this case the Philippines, naturally led to a different kind of perspective. So the programme shifted to a greater emphasis on bringing in new voices to help shape the new paradigm.’

This can be seen as an evolution of the economics programme rather than a huge turnaround, Smith says. Despite decades of development efforts, there never seems to be enough capacity in the global South, and deciding to focus on building that capacity directly, and not doing it through northern intermediaries, was a real change.’ Nor was it without stresses and strains and challenges. ‘It was risky territory. For a \$13 billion institution like the Ford Foundation, questioning the economic underpinnings on which its own wealth had been built is always a risky thing.’ And shifting the balance of funding away from historical grantees like the Institute of International Economics to other actors in the global South ‘was not a frictionless process’.

So there was pushback from inside the institution, Smith remembers – from Ford’s internal management structure—and from long-term grantees. ‘Ford doesn’t operate in a vacuum. Making a shift in direction won’t attract applause for your intellectual insights if it

**“Programme officers in Ford’s overseas offices expressed strong support for the initiative because the domestic civil society groups with whom they were working were becoming the focus of opposition to liberalization and deregulation policies.”**

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means others are going to get less funding.’ On the other hand, programme officers in Ford’s overseas offices expressed strong support for the initiative because the domestic civil society groups with whom they were working were becoming the focus of opposition to liberalization and deregulation policies.

### **The first stage**

Once the decision to go ahead had been taken and I had been appointed to head up the programme, the first task was to find a strategy or set of strategies to ‘implement’ the solution. We had to find the people who could do it and learn what they were interested in doing and could do. As an initial step, we spent about a year surveying the field, talking to academics and activists, and attending key events where discussions on development policies would take place. We were careful to take all viewpoints into consideration. Those consulted included the Institute for International Economics (now the Peterson Institute), the Inter-American Dialogue, the World Bank, and colleagues at other ‘mainstream’ foundations, such as Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Rockefeller Foundation. In addition, the start of the programme coincided with street protests in Seattle over the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) ministerial gathering there and I talked to activists involved in this movement.

We also made grants to organizations studying the field, for example the North-South Institute (a Canadian government-owned think-tank with a reputation for analytically rigorous studies on the impact of deregulation and liberalization policies). Rather than directly questioning the need for liberalization, these studies showed how the process often did not produce the results intended. Some also showed how these programmes could be better shaped.

The consultation period culminated, in early 2001, in a three-day ‘convening’ of academics, activists and civil society organizations, organized by Ford jointly with the Rockefeller Foundation at its Bellagio centre. Three key propositions came out of this meeting:

1. It was important to support work that produces historically accurate economic analysis that can contribute to policy design. In many cases, policies were not being applied because economic theory justified them but on the basis of amateurish political analysis – for example, the view that no society would reform its wasteful, elitist-oriented policies without pressure from the World Bank or the IMF.

2. Domestic actors – government officials, academics, civil society organizations – were needed in developing countries that could contribute to the design of economic policies in a way that engaged with the analyses and ideas coming from the Washington think-tanks and international funding agencies.
3. There was an influential view in international bodies such as the WTO and the IMF that the less discretionary space governments in developing countries had, the easier it would be for them to integrate into the international economic system.

### The portfolio's funding strategy

The funding strategy was critical to the portfolio's success. There was a willingness to fund over a long period of time; humility about not knowing the solution and a willingness to learn; and an inclusive effort to determine the problem and identify possible solutions.

The portfolio made different kinds of grants as the programme evolved:

- To fund individual scholars to build a rigorous counter-argument
- To fund centres of knowledge (more powerful than an individual)
- To fund linkages among the centres
- To facilitate scholars' access to key global institutions



GEM-IWG meeting in Buenos Aires in 2010.

### The key weapon: knowledge-building networks

In starting to address these points, the most effective intervention we discovered was to support not just individual scholars or even academic centres but knowledge-building networks, often based in universities: in Cambridge (the Cambridge Programme on Rethinking Development Economics – 'CAPORDE'), in the University of Utah (the Gender and Macroeconomics International Working Group

– 'GEM-IWG') and in Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi (the International

Development Associates Network – ‘IDEAs’). Significant efforts were also made to found the Initiative for Policy Dialogue (IPD) and the International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN).

### Trying to punch above our weight

There were broadly speaking, three challenges. First, the portfolio had minuscule resources for research and advocacy compared to the resources of the main agencies supporting economic reform, such as the Bretton Woods institutions (the IMF and the World Bank). Second, the knowledge networks might be composed mainly of friends of the main grantee and not become far-reaching enough to affect global economic thinking and/or become a player in policy debates. Third, the resulting analysis might be looked upon by professionals in the field as insufficiently rigorous methodologically. It was important for strong analysts to be involved. In short, would the capabilities developed by the initiative be enough to change the policy landscape?

### What has been achieved?

In a book entitled *How Rich Countries Got Rich ... Why Poor Countries Stay Poor*, published in 2007, the portfolio is credited with ‘single-handedly’ changing the whole field of development studies. From my point of view, the main achievement was fostering a number of large networks of analysts and activists that could engage critically with the economic policies associated with globalization. In Brad Smith’s view, the fact that the networks survive today is surely the best possible indicator of the success of the programme.

“From my point of view, the main achievement was fostering a number of large networks of analysts and activists that could engage critically with the economic policies associated with globalization.”

Many people from these networks have since taken up policy positions in developing country governments: the current Brazilian Minister of Finance was involved in the CAPORDE network, for instance. Others work as staff and consultants of international and civil society organizations such as the UN. Still others have started innovative academic programmes which counter mainstream development studies thinking in developing countries. While many of these individuals would have risen in their careers without participating in these networks, many acknowledge that what they learned from the experience allowed them to make distinctive contributions in their own work. Some new fields of study were created and important analytical standards developed. These included gender and trade and gender and macroeconomics.

The networks themselves spawned similar efforts by the participants in their own regions, funded from other sources. From CAPORDE

came ‘LAPORDE’ (Latin American Program in Rethinking Development Economics) and ‘APORDE’ (African Program in Rethinking Development Economics). From GEM-IWG came the Asia-Pacific GEM network.

When the 2007-08 economic crisis broke, the UN convened a Commission of Experts of the President of the UN General Assembly on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System (later referred to as the ‘Stiglitz Commission’.) with 18 members and a rapporteur. Five of these experts, including the commission chair, Joseph Stiglitz of Columbia University, and the rapporteur, who actually did all the drafting, were partners of the portfolio.

In addition, an indirect indicator of the portfolio’s influence on the theoretical arena is the number of direct grantees that have been awarded the Leontief Prize – this is awarded by the Global Development and Environment Institute at Tufts University ‘to recognize outstanding contributions to economic theory that address contemporary realities and support just and sustainable societies’. Prize winners include Ha-Joon

Chang in 2005, Jomo Kwame Sundaram in 2007, Jose Antonio Ocampo in 2008, Lance Taylor in 2015, and Diane Elson in 2016. Bina Agarwal, prize winner in 2010, was a key contributor in the early days of GEM-IWG’s workshops but not a direct grantee.



‘This set of grants from Butch Montes at the Ford Foundation provided critical support to key economists in both the Global North and the Global South.

That funding allowed them to develop rigorous critiques of policies based on neoliberal economic theory that had been harmful to the poor. Subsequent funding from Ford supported a network of centres that, together, advocated for a different set of economic policies that could not be ignored. The work supported by these grants resulted in nothing less than changing the way we think about economic development – with the explicit aim of helping the most marginalized.’

*Joseph Stiglitz, former Chief Economist for the World Bank and 2001 recipient of the Nobel Prize in Economics*



### What next?

Although the International Economic Policy portfolio was formally discontinued when I left the Ford Foundation, a Brazilian economist, Leonardo Burlamaqui, was hired to succeed me, and he came from one of the networks. And portfolio partners continue to be invited as key resource speakers at Ford's convenings related to globalization. 'One disadvantage of Ford's limited term for

programme officers – who don't usually serve for more than six years – is that it can limit the continuity of programmes,' reflects Brad Smith, but this one, he feels, had 'a good run'.

Other efforts to support alternative analytical frameworks have emerged since the Ford portfolio closed, notably the Institute of New Economic Thinking (INET), created by George Soros in response to the 2007-08 financial crisis, which some believe was inspired by the work of the International Economic Policy portfolio. Discussions on the start-up of INET began from the time that Robert Johnson, now president of INET, served on the Stiglitz Commission.

While the Washington consensus has been debunked, says Smith, 'some of the alternatives haven't done that well, for example in Argentina and Brazil. Financial shocks are going to be more frequent and more intense, and vulnerable people will need to be protected from them.' One thing that partners in the portfolio consistently predicted – that the preferred economic integration approaches would result in enormous increases in inequality – is now a significant political and policy issue.

**Manuel Montes** is senior adviser on finance and development at the South Centre. From 1999 to 2005, he was a program officer at the Ford Foundation. He is solely responsible for all errors, opinions and analyses. Email [montes@southcentre.org](mailto:montes@southcentre.org)

### Key facts

**Grant amount:** \$4 million to \$4.5 million annually

**Grant period:** 1999-2005

**Other support:** apart from the Bellagio meeting, jointly hosted with the Rockefeller Foundation, the portfolio held two other convenings for portfolio partners and other experts

**Biggest achievement:** the building of networks of researchers, policy advocates and academics in developing countries (mostly outside of existing academic establishments) which have spawned offshoots in regional contexts.

## JOSEPH ROWNTREE CHARITABLE TRUST, UK

### Supporting the Carbon Tracker Initiative



**Stephen Pittam**

Bringing a radical and visionary idea to the mainstream of global economic thinking within a five year timespan is a remarkable achievement. Five years ago the term 'stranded assets' was unknown; now it is central to financial markets thinking about the value of fossil fuel holdings. This is due to the work of the Carbon Tracker Initiative, funded in its early stages by grants from a handful of US and UK foundations, including a £38,000 grant (later extended) from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT). This is the story of how JRCT, a social justice funder, came to make this grant, and what it achieved.

#### Key messages

- Social justice issues are often associated with bottom-up change, but philanthropy with a social justice lens can also play a transformational role with major global issues like climate change and financial systems. JRCT, a relatively small player, helped make a big difference in the climate change arena by supporting a group of individuals with new ideas.
- Supporting Carbon Tracker Initiative required a leap of faith on the part of the funder, a willingness to cede some control to the unknown and to support a project in an area JRCT didn't know much about.
- The story raises the question of the foundation world's connection with the corporate and financial sectors. When is the relationship too 'cosy' and when might it stop foundations doing their job?

### The problem of stranded assets

In late 2010, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) received a request for support for a new initiative, the Carbon Tracker Initiative (CTI), whose aim was ‘to make the financial markets accountable for the carbon reserves that are listed on them, and hold investors accountable for the carbon intensity of their investment portfolios’.

Climate scientists had calculated that if 1,000 Gt of CO<sub>2</sub> is released globally in the period between 2000 and 2050, there is a 25 per cent chance that global warming will exceed 2°C. By 2010, we had already used up one third of this allowance, and the fossil fuel reserves easily exceeded the balance. In order to prevent this, said CTI, between 60 and 80 per cent of these reserves would need to stay in the ground, so fossil fuel companies were in effect greatly overvalued if you took account of these ‘stranded assets’. The financial community must be brought to see the need to assess the systemic risks they were facing. As the value of fossil fuel companies fell to reflect their true value, investment would begin to move from them to more sustainable forms of energy.

The problem was that the market system didn’t have a way of factoring in the dangers in the way companies are valued. As an example, Coal India was floated on the Mumbai Stock Exchange shortly before the Cancun Climate Change Conference in November 2010, at which the commitment was made to limit global warming to 2°C. The shares were marketed to international investors including those in London. Investors flocked to get a slice of the new stock, yet the prospectus for Coal India didn’t even mention the climate change risk. CTI planned to identify the cumulative fossil fuel reserves held by companies listed on stock exchanges to demonstrate that excessive levels were already capitalized on the markets.

The application came from a new organization called Investor Watch and was submitted under the Trust’s Power & Accountability programme.

### A project for a social justice funder?

Now it is as clear as day, but at the time I struggled to understand how this project could fit with JRCT’s interest in promoting social justice. Working on the financial markets doesn’t at first glance strike one as a usual issue within the social justice frame.

And yet in our modern globalized world JRCT has been increasingly drawn to look at the many imbalances within the financial and

“Now it is as clear as day, but at the time I struggled to understand how this project could fit with JRCT’s interest in promoting social justice. Working on the financial markets doesn’t at first glance strike one as a usual issue within the social justice frame.”

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**“We always tried to give a broad framework of interests when defining our programme guidelines, but after that we wanted to leave plenty of room for those with fire in their belly to excite us with their applications and convince us that they could change the world with our modest support.”**

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corporate systems that are adding to global inequality and leading to the poorest people being hit the hardest, whether in relation to income distribution or the impact of climate change. For too long the philanthropic community has ignored the power of the corporate and financial sectors. Could this be because foundations are too close to these sectors and rely on them for generating their own income? The lack of agencies working on holding these sectors to account is surely one reason why the crises keep coming. So it is important for foundations working through a social justice lens to recognize the need for social change at multiple levels, not least with those who control the economy.

A couple of years earlier we had decided to include the phrase ‘climate change and corporate accountability’ in the guidelines for the Power & Accountability programme. We didn’t know exactly what this meant, but such are the advantages of being a responsive funder. We were generalists rather than experts – our skills lay in discerning if a project was viable, likely to be effective, and had the right leadership. We always tried to give a broad framework of interests when defining our programme guidelines, but after that we wanted to leave plenty of room for those with fire in their belly to excite us with their applications and convince us that they could change the world with our modest support.

Was the Carbon Tracker Initiative such an initiative? Its plan was to work through research and advocacy: the research would identify the cumulative fossil fuel reserves held by companies listed on stock exchanges and highlight the carbon intensity of the stocks and markets that asset managers and asset owners invested in. This would demonstrate the need for the financial community to assess the systemic risk they were facing. CTI would then use the research findings to advocate for change in relation to companies disclosing their fossil fuel reserves; financial institutions ensuring carbon issues were addressed when raising capital; and stock exchanges requiring improved analysis of carbon risk.

### **A risk, but one worth taking**

From the initial consultation with the JRCT programme committee right up to approval of the grant, everyone found the application difficult to grasp. Two trustees and I had met the applicants, Jeremy Leggett and James Leaton, in early 2011 – this is something we always do before making a grant of any substance. It became clear that those involved in CTI were steeped in climate change and sustainability issues to the extent that it was difficult for them to communicate those

issues to non-experts in a comprehensible way! But we could tell they knew their stuff.

So why did we go ahead? Despite the scepticism and perplexities, the committee members were all intrigued by what seemed to be innovative thinking. The composition of the leadership team behind CTI was also in its favour: Jeremy Leggett, an expert in climate change and energy; Mark Campanale, an expert on financial markets and investment; and James Leaton, who brought an understanding of sustainability issues from ten years' experience in responsible investments and NGO policy consultancy. For such a small team, it had exactly the right kinds of expertise. This was part of what made them attractive.

**“So why did we go ahead? Despite the scepticism and perplexities, the committee members were all intrigued by what seemed to be innovative thinking. The composition of the leadership team behind CTI was also in its favour.”**

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Moreover, two members of the team were known quantities to JRCT. Mark Campanale had worked with the company entrusted with investing the Trust's endowment in an ethical way. In fact it was while he and his colleague Nick Robins were at this company that the thinking behind CTI was developed. Mark was also a key player in a new initiative to set up a social stock exchange in London which JRCT had supported. Way back in 1987, the Trust had supported Jeremy Leggett in setting up VERTIC, an organization that monitors the verification of international agreements on weapon treaties. The project had been very successful.

But doubts persisted right up to the making of the grant, not only about the proposal's fit with our programmes but about the feasibility of the idea itself, as this excerpt from the February 2011 meeting of JRCT's Power & Accountability Committee shows:

‘It was acknowledged that this initiative is risky and will depend on the credibility of the tool that they develop. There was some scepticism as to whether the project would work, but given the seriousness of the situation outlined by Investor Watch, the Committee felt that offering support was a risk worth taking. The importance of Investor Watch developing a strong communications strategy was emphasised. The committee agreed a grant of £38,000 for one year as requested.’

In my experience, taking calculated risks is part of the DNA of JRCT. The Trust tries to avoid the arrogance that can so easily creep into organizations that have resources and thus power. JRCT knows that it doesn't have the answers to all the pressing issues of the day. It maintains its role as a responsive funder because it wants to attract those with a clear vision of what needs to be done. Its role is that of



facilitating such people and organizations to get on with the job. In the case of CTI, the Trust knew of the track record of the people involved, was convinced by the vision of CTI, and found its analysis compelling, if hard to grasp. The Trust saw its role as that of undertaking thorough due diligence, making an assessment and reaching a judgement, and then liberating and empowering those involved to get on with the task without undue interference.

### The crucial role of the foundation sector

We learned at the meeting with the applicants that while Investor Watch had no accounts because it had been set up so recently, the Tellus Mater Foundation had supported the scoping exercise for the framing of CTI, and two US-based funds had given seed funding – the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Growald Family Fund. They deserve great credit for this initial funding, which had enabled Investor Watch to register as a UK company and recruit its first staff member. The request to JRCT was for a grant of £38,000 towards a budget of just £78,000 to secure the first year's operating costs of an initiative attempting to influence the multi-trillion-pound financial market sector. At the time of the meeting we heard that no core funding had yet been secured, but the Polden Puckham Charitable Foundation offered a grant shortly afterwards. It was the foundation sector that got CTI off the ground, each funder operating independently but equally impressed by the vision of this embryonic initiative.

### 'CTI has triggered the climate swerve'



Former US vice president Al Gore opened Carbon Tracker's official COP21 side-event where their 'danger zone' report was launched.

Within the year, CTI had come up with its first ground-breaking report, *Unburnable Carbon: Are the financial markets carrying a carbon bubble?* which immediately prompted a new global debate on

the future of energy and investment. Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org, picked up on this report and disseminated its findings in an important article in Rolling Stone magazine in July 2012. Three years later, CTI has ‘changed the financial language of climate change’, according to the Guardian newspaper (it received the newspaper’s sustainable business award for innovation in communicating sustainability in 2014 and 2015). In the words of the New York Times, ‘CTI has triggered the Climate Swerve – a major historical change in consciousness that is neither predictable nor orderly’. CTI has provided the intellectual arguments that underpin the Guardian’s Keep it in the Ground campaign. Likewise its arguments have informed the growing Divest-Invest movement, with its pledge to sell holdings of fossil fuel shares and invest instead in climate solutions, such as renewable energy, clean tech and energy efficiency.

It is important to build the movement working for change, but CTI’s influence has gone well beyond those that already have a commitment to change. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) have heeded the warnings that CTI’s research has prompted, the latter confirming CTI’s claim that burning all known fossil fuels would result in more than 2°C of warming.

Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of England, with Michael Bloomberg at the launch of the Financial Stability Board (FSB) Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures at COP21.



Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, has indicated his support for the CTI analysis, most notably on 29 September 2015 when he delivered a remarkable speech at Lloyd’s of London, endorsing CTI’s stranded assets thesis. A carbon budget consistent

with a 2°C target, he said, ‘would render the vast majority of reserves “stranded” – oil, gas and coal that will be literally unburnable without expensive carbon capture technology, which itself alters fossil fuel economics’. Echoing CTI’s warnings about the risks of a disorderly transition to a low-carbon economy, Governor Carney added that ‘a wholesale reassessment of prospects, especially if it were to occur suddenly, could potentially destabilise markets’.

### Key facts

**Grant amount:** £38,000 plus an extra £3,000 for communications support

**Grant period:** one year from March 2011

**Subsequent grants:** this was followed by two further grants of £80,000, each for a two-year period, made in July 2012 and July 2014

**Other support:** helping the Environmental Funders Network to get Mark Campanale in front of a European Foundation Centre audience in Belfast

**Biggest achievement:** getting the Bank of England on side with the CTI analysis and the concept of stranded assets

Introducing a completely new idea and seeing it transform the thinking of the financial markets in five years is a remarkable achievement. The small but growing team at CTI deserve all the praise for this and none of the foundations that helped CTI get off the ground would want to take a share. Nevertheless, those foundations deserve credit for being willing to be adventurous, to take risks, to back visionary ideas, and to strengthen the hands of those who know what needs to be done.

**Stephen Pittam** is a former Trust Secretary of JRCT. He joined the trust in 1986 and served as its Trust Secretary from 2001 until his retirement in 2012. He now serves on the boards of the Global Greengrants Fund, the Global Fund for Community Foundations and the Polden Puckham Charitable Foundation. Email [stephen.pittam@gn.apc.org](mailto:stephen.pittam@gn.apc.org)

### For more information

[www.carbontracker.org](http://www.carbontracker.org)

Video: 3-minute animation ‘Fossil Fuels: A Risky Business?’

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzOnTKHopS4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzOnTKHopS4)

Video of Mark Carney’s speech on stranded assets at Lloyd’s of London

[www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Pages/speeches/2015/844.aspx](http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Pages/speeches/2015/844.aspx)

Infographic [www.carbontracker.org/in-the-media/is-oil-becoming-stranded](http://www.carbontracker.org/in-the-media/is-oil-becoming-stranded)

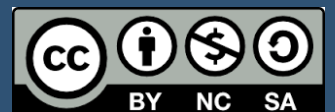
October 2015 report Lost in Transition: How the energy sector is missing potential demand destruction  
[www.carbontracker.org/report/lost\\_in\\_transition](http://www.carbontracker.org/report/lost_in_transition)

November 2015 report The \$2 trillion stranded assets danger zone: How fossil fuel firms risk destroying investor returns  
[www.carbontracker.org/report/stranded-assets-danger-zone](http://www.carbontracker.org/report/stranded-assets-danger-zone)

February 2016 blog 'Is Oil Becoming Stranded?'  
[www.carbontracker.org/is-oil-becoming-stranded-2](http://www.carbontracker.org/is-oil-becoming-stranded-2)

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